



HEALTH RESORTS OF ALTAI:

ULTIMATE EXPERIENCE IN RELAXATION AND WELLBEING AT THE HEART OF NATURE

The Altai Region is situated in the south-eastern part of West Siberia, stretching 600 kilometres from west to east and 400 kilometres from north to south. The region's location between the West Siberian Plain and the Altai Mountains, its geological and geomorphological heterogeneity and peculiar orography determine Altai's varying climate and great diversity of landscapes.

Altai has temperate continental climate with hot summer and cold winter. July is the warmest month of the year with temperatures averaging at +21°C, and January is the coldest month with lows averaging at around -20°C. Flat plain regions of Altai are characterised by a large number of sunny days, whereas foothill and mountain areas have higher cloud amounts.

Altai boasts extensive water resources including more than 17 thousand rivers and 11 thousand lakes. The major waterway is the Ob River formed at the confluence of the Biya and Katun rivers. The Kulundinskaya steppe, one of Russia's largest salt-bearing basins, has numerous endorheic salt lakes, many of which have bed salt deposits or high salt concentration in brine.

Smaller fresh-water lakes prevail in the mountainous regions. The Kolyvan Lake surrounded by intricate granite rocks is inimitable in its beauty. Another popular tourist destination is the Belaye (White) Lake in Mountain Kolyvan. The Aya Lake is known as the blue pearl of the low-hill Altai.

The Altai Mountains are rich in flora and famous for medical herbs, in particular the Golden Root (*Rhodiola rosea*), Maral Root (*Rhaponticum*), Glycyrrhiza, Hedysarum (Sweetvetch), etc. Taiga grasslands are home to a wide variety of grass species and wild flowers; here bees produce the most flavourful honey, which is unique in its taste and texture. This is due to the peculiar mineral composition and organic structure of Altai soil, the region's continental climate that favours intensive sap flow and release of nectar, rich and diverse flora and pristine environment.

Mountain herbs give strength to the beautiful maral (or red) deer - velvet antlers of young marals are highly valued in medicine. Recently, increasingly popular have become baths enriched with extracts from antlers of maral known for their powerful healing properties. Visitors are offered a revitalising course of 7 to 10 baths. Tourists are also invited to visit maral deer farms.

Among the region's 35 healing springs, the most thoroughly explored are the Belokurikhinskoye, Iskrovskoye and Chernovskoye deposits of radon-rich mineral water, the Zavyalovo deposit of mineral healing water, and the Bekhtemirskoye deposit of mineral argentiferous water.

The Central Research Institute of Balneology and Physiotherapy and the Tomsk Research Institute of Physiotherapy and Balneology are responsible for studying Altai's natural medicinal and therapeutic resources.

As of October 2011, there are 42 health resorts operating in Altai Region. The major resort based on the thermal radon water springs is Belokurikha – a modern balneotherapeutic health resort well-known far beyond the region's borders.

Belokurikha is a resort of federal significance and is on the list of Russia's unique health spas. The resort is based around natural nitric-siliceous radon thermal water springs, which differ from other mineral springs due to their higher efficiency. Thermal waters are known to favourably influence cardiovascular, nervous and endocrine systems, immunity and metabolism.

In its early years Belokurikha was mainly specialised on treating of cardiovascular and musculoskeletal systems diseases due to the specific effects of its healing waters. Since then, the resort has widened its specialisation; new therapy techniques and treatment methods are being developed in collaboration with the leading research centres of Siberia.

Treatment methods with the use of natural healing remedies, such as honey, herbs, mud, and ingredients of animal origin, are being introduced. Greater





attention is paid to the development of short therapeutic programs popular among socially active business people.

The resort specialises in treating cardiovascular, musculoskeletal, nervous and endocrine systems diseases, metabolism dysfunctions, dermatoses, diseases of gastrointestinal tract and respiratory apparatus, urological and gynecological diseases, professional diseases, ENT diseases, and in pediatry.

Today, Belokurikha is a multi-disciplinary balneotherapeutic health resort with highly qualified medical personnel, modern facilities and equipment and advanced technologies. It has everything for medical treatment, health-improvement and active recreation. There are 15 health-resort facilities in Belokurikha, which can host about 5,000 people at a time. Among them the largest health centres are "Kurort Belokurikha", "Rossiya" and "Altai-West".

Another health-improving destination is the capital city of Altai Region, Barnaul, where one can find several health centres offering modern treatment programmes. The most well-known are the health resorts "Barnaulskij", "Ob" and "Sosnovy Bor". They specialise in treating diseases of circulatory system, digestive apparatus, nervous and musculoskeletal systems, non-tuberculous diseases of respiratory apparatus, gynaecological diseases, diseases of urogenital system, podiatry, etc.

The "Sunrise above Biya" health resort with its mineral argentine springs is popular among both the visitors and the local people of the Sibirsky district. Of special popularity are herbal baths with mineral argentine water that are known for their favourable influence.

Saline lakes of steppe Altai have high therapeutic potential, which opens new horizons for the development of balneology resorts. The Big and Small Yarovoye Lakes, Gorko-Pereshechnoye and Malinovoye Lakes and other salt lakes attract a large number of tourists ever year. Highly mineralised

brine and mud are now successfully used in the state health care institution – the Regional Centre of Restorative Medicine and Rehabilitation at the Lake of Yarovoye. As of today, the centre has five departments: neurology, therapeutics, gynaecology, surgical and dermatological unit.

Zavyalovsky district of Altai Region is long known for its unique combination of health resort factors, including healing sulphide and sapropelic muds, brine, mineral water, pine forests and the absence of polluting industries. The therapeutic properties of mud and mineral water have been thoroughly studied by the Altai State Medical University and Tomsk Research Institute of Physiotherapy and Balneology.

Owing to the rich variety of natural medicinal resources, Altai Region is rightfully considered to be one of the most promising regions in Russia for the development of health and wellness tourism.

As one of its key objectives, the Administration of Altai Region has set the development of a positive image of the region in Russia and world-wide as an investment-friendly, modern and rapidly progressing territory rich in natural medicinal resources. Efficient development of Altai's health resorts positively contributes to health and wellbeing of people, region's economic stability, and profitability and competitiveness of the health resort industry, and improves the quality of health resort services.

