



Members Bulletin

"Avalon" Historico-geographical Society

year 2012

Editor's note

Dear members of "Avalon"!

We are glad to present to your attention the second issue of the annual Members Bulletin, where we made our best to give an account of all the activities in which our organization was engaged in 2012, as well as



to expound our progress, achievements and prospects.

It has to be said that during this year we mostly dreamt, made plans and tried to raise funding for the realization of our ideas. For this reason 2012 hasn't been marked as the year of large expedition projects. Thus, even though we as usual spent quite a lot of time in the steppes, this year we had to work a lot more indoors than outdoors. Well, it only means that the next year will be all about outdoor activities.

I never liked it when year in and year out people kept telling me about their organizations' progress, characterized their development as sustainable and used to praise them using all the possible word stereotypes. However, strangely enough, it occurs to me now that the present situation can be described exactly like this... I thought, for instance, that 2011 was a very successful year in terms of bicycle movement development in Karaganda. Now I understand that the results of 2012 are in no way comparable with those of the last year. Similar situation is also observable in other areas of our activities. I would like to express my hope that the pace of our development will keep growing and bringing us the reasons for joy and hopes year by year.

Yet I would like to kindly ask you

to tell about "Avalon" and its projects to your friends and acquaintances, hence involving them in our organization's activities. After all the growing number of our followers will impel the authorities to consider our opinion and act accordingly. Besides, it will ensure us sustainable financial position and fame in Kazakhstan and abroad. Our projects will be realized, whereas our aims will be achieved in a faster and easier way.

Let us dream and make a reality of our dreams together!

Vitaliy Shuptar,
President of "Avalon" HGS

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Tourism development

September 1, 2012 marked the beginning of Phase 2 of the project "Ecotourism in Central Kazakhstan: conservation of the PA natural resources and creation of economic opportunities in the rural areas", implemented by "Avalon" public foundation in cooperation with "Karaganda regional ecological museum" PA and "Nomadic Travel Kazakhstan" company with financial support from the GEF/UNDP Small grants programme. The project, which is going to last till August 2013, aims at biodiversity conservation and





sustainable development of natural resources in the territory of Kyzylarai wildlife reserve (Karaganda region), as well as consolidation and development of the potential of the local community in the neighbouring village of Shabanbai Bi by means of ecological tourism development, exercising control over the stream of non-official holiday-makers and creation of the respective infrastructure in the reserve.

By the present moment a number of workshops have been held, all of them devoted to the practice of sustainable use of natural resources and environmentally friendly behaviour in the PA territory. Important meetings with the active members of eco-site community have taken place:

during the sessions were considered the prospects of creation of the community council, responsible for ecotourism development, in Shabanbai Bi village. Our field work in fall resulted in the creation of one more route leading to Aksoran peak (this time, beginning from the southern slope), as well as exploration of the eastern part of the Kyzylarai mountain mass (the Zhaman-Kyzylarai mountains, ascending Karasoran peak and localization of Tesiktas). The Tourist map-scheme of the Kyzylarai mountain mass, the first of its kind, is about to be published, just like the maps-schemes of Shabanbai Bi village and Aktogai town.

Preparation of educational modules for pupils has almost come to its end (agreement was

made with the akim of Aktogai region regarding its distribution in the schools of the region). Traveller's booklet for local tourists, devoted to environmentally friendly behaviour in the PA, is ready for publication (it was created on the basis of the ecological norms of behaviour of the reserve's visitors, which had been worked out by "Avalon"). The project activities are implemented with some delay, mostly caused by unfavourable weather conditions, which often change the schedule of our working trips. However, in general everything goes according to the plan.

A couple more workshops for the local residents and employees of the Kyzylarai reserve are scheduled for 2013. We are also planning to build eco-trails and camping sites, mount informational tables in the reserve territory, as well as create Tourist information centre in Shabanbai Bi village. In the spring of 2013 media trip to the Kyzylarai mountain and forest oasis will be arranged for the Kazakhstani mass media representatives (if we get support from the authorities of Karaganda city, representatives of Kazakhstan's leading travel companies will also have a chance to participate).

We are pleased to note that we are not the only ones who make efforts in developing the eco-site. So do the state authorities: in the December of 2012 piped water supply system was finally arranged in Shabanbai Bi village.

Due to our assistance materials on tourism in Central Kazakhstan on the whole and Kyzylarai eco-site in particular, were published in the German magazines "Natur" and "Terra". An article about Kyzylarai was also published in the magazine "Pilgrim" (Kazakhstan). The Kyzylarai eco-site slowly but steadily gains popularity among independent travellers (also from Kazakhstan), which is partially a consequence of such kind of publications.

In September 2012 at the ceremony, dedicated to World Tourism Day "Nomadic Travel





Kazakhstan" company was awarded by the Department of tourism and sports of Karaganda region the title of "The best ecotour operator". Let us remember, the company was founded in 2009 in the framework of the ETPACK project "Ecological tourism and public awareness in Central Kazakhstan", which was realized by German biodiversity conservation union (NABU), Karaganda Ecological Museum and "Avalon" public foundation.

Finally in the very end of 2012 "Avalon" took part in the workshop "Ecotourism development in Karaganda region", organized by Kazakhstan Tourist Association (KTA) by the order of Karaganda regional department of tourism and sports.

In general, cooperation between "Avalon" and the local authorities has been growing. There is a hope that the numerous ideas concerned with tourism development in the region (literature publishing, expedition projects, support of the Tourist information centre by EcoMuseum), which had been suggested by "Avalon", will be realized in the coming year. Meanwhile, the

new version of Tourist map of Central Kazakhstan, also worked out by the request of the Department of tourism and sports, is almost ready. Even earlier than that (in spring), our organization together with "Nomadic Travel Kazakhstan" and Tatyana Kambulina had created Tourist map-scheme of Karaganda in Russian, Kazakh and English.

It has to be noted that activities of "Avalon" in the field of tourism development are implemented on the Republican or even Central Asian scale.

As for Kazakhstan, in 2012 "Avalon" took part in the media trip, organized by the Department of tourism and sports of Almaty region. In the framework of the event, our representative visited Kora and Bayankol gorges. The infotour was followed by a journey to Altyn-Emel state national park with Photosafari.kz team in the framework of the project "Unknown Kazakhstan". Some of the materials, which had been created as a result of both trips, have been published, others will come out in 2013 and, hopefully, will contribute to the promotion of tourist sights of Kazakhstan.

During this year we took part in two major events: "Discovery Central Asia Travel Forum 2012" (Bishkek, April 2012), organized by "Silk Road Media" publishing house (our long-term partner, by the way); and workshop on "Business and tourist trips as a potential for tourism development in Central Asia" (Almaty, November 2012), organized by East and Central Europe Association (OMV) in cooperation with German international cooperation agency (GIZ). In the course of both events were highlighted the activities aimed at tourism development in the territory of Kyzylarai eco-site, as well as were considered the ideas and plans of "Avalon" on the subject of trans-border tourism development in Central Asia and intensification of cooperation between the tourism organizations in Central Asian





countries.

At the moment we are considering a possibility of organizing workshops by "Avalon"'s specialists in Zeravshan valley (Tajikistan), aimed at promotion of the region as travel destination, by means of social networks. There are also some plans about promoting Pamir and Zeravshan (guidebooks publishing, virtual travel systems etc.). Next year will show us if these plans can be realized.

We are very pleased to note that last year membership of "Avalon" public foundation in The Regional Initiative (TRI) was confirmed. TRI is an international community that unites the organizations of South Asia, Central Asia and East Europe,

working in the field of sustainable tourism development at the regional level. Besides, "Avalon" was appointed the position of TRI's country representative in Kazakhstan.

Cycling Karaganda

There is no doubt that year by year Karaganda becomes a bicycle city. This is proven by the recent opening of several bicycle shops, including "Bicycle" (Maslennikov's bicycle workshop) and "Limpopo Outdoor" (in both shops "Avalon" members are granted good discounts), as well as "Astana-Masters" (we will tell you more about this one later, unfortunately, it will be a negative comment). In the passing year a great deal of various bicycle-

related events took place: from celebrating the old new year bicycle-style and cross-country bicycle race to the mounting of 3 new bicycle stands in Karaganda city and preparatory campaign in the framework of the new bicycle project, planned for 2013. Besides, the number of our bicycle forum members rises day by day, it makes 313 people as of December 2012.

We would like to note that more and more bicycle-related events become traditional in Karaganda. You may read more about the most important ones of them below.

The bicycle season was as usual opened on the May holidays in Dariya (the Buggyly mountains).

In June was held the 5th annual bicycle festival "Karaganda VeloCity 2012", organized by "Avalon" in cooperation with PA "Centre of coordination and information on ecological education "EcoObraz". The event was supported by International school project for application or resources and energy (SPARE), music club and band "Pyatiy ugol", Maslennikov's bicycle shop-workshop "Bicycle" and the Culture and leisure parks department in Karaganda city. This time the festival was held under the motto "I'm saving for myself" in order to attract the publicity's attention to energy-saving technologies - another important part of sustainable development and responsible attitude towards the environment. Throughout the festival "EcoObraz" team members shared information about energy-saving technologies with the guests and participants of the event.

On August 12 was held "Avalon Trophy" bicycle cross-country race in the Soran mountains nearby Karaganda. This time it was sponsored by "Limpopo Outdoor (Karaganda)" shop, "Bassar Electronics" company with trademark "Garmin", as well as "Chocolife.me" company. 39 cyclists took part in the event, most of them representatives from Karaganda, Temirtau, Shakhinsk





and Astana. The participants were to ride from 11 to 18 km across country. Unlike last time, this time the route was more complicated, it included some sectors with ups and downs. There were specially arranged sectors of impassable roads, where it was easier to run alongside bicycle rather than to ride it. The first places in the race according to four subgroups were taken by Dmitry Ivanov (Temirtau), Oleg Sharipov (Temirtau, AMT CCP "Vostochnaya" team), Viktoriya Lee (Karaganda, A-Team) and Denis Rayetskiy (one of "Avalon" members from Karaganda).

In end-September, by the initiative and with support from Vladimir Loktionov (a member of "Avalon"), the second bicycle cross in the Karkaraly mountains was organized. This time more than 30 people took part in the event, which is quite much for out-of-town events of this kind.

Moreover, this year ties between bicycle communities of Karaganda and Astana have transformed into real actions. Cyclists from Astana took part in "Karaganda-VeloCity" bicycle festival and "Avalon Trophy" race, taking four prize places in the latter, whereas cyclists from Karaganda participated in "KTL cross-country 2012" bicycle race in Astana, where a member of "Avalon", Nikolay Zakharchuk, was granted the 2nd place in

Category M35. Several attempts have been made to organize joint bicycle trips of both communities (a ride to Madi spring and failed bicycle trip to Borovoye), which, for some objective reasons, did not have many participants.

In the spring of 2012 "Avalon" organized a photo contest "Velo-Vesna" in cooperation with Valeriy Lashkevich's photostudio and photoschool. 27 participants from all over Kazakhstan, from Atyrau to Ust-Kamenogorsk, took part in the contest. All in all we have received 80 photographs. The important requirement for the contest participation was submission of the photos, showing both a bicycle and a girl. Internet-vote followed by the ground juries vote revealed

four winners, who opened up the lead, namely Anatoliy Kireyev (Ust-Kamenogorsk) and Alexander Shumov (Karaganda), as well as Tatyana Bardina (Temirtau), who won in two nominations at once. Unfortunately, one of the photo contest sponsors, "Astana-Masters" shop, mishandled the situation and failed to meet its engagement to the photo contest winners by refusing to cash in gift vouchers. May it stay on Valeriy Gerlits' own head and may his business feel the negative impact of the boycott of Karaganda cyclists who support us.

This year Karaganda hosted the first bicycle march, confined to the World Carfree Day (22 September). Despite bad wea-





informational packages about the most interesting city sights and provide them with QR-codes, which would direct people to the infopackages, published on "Avalon" website.

Historical heritage

We have made our first steps or, to be exact, have tested the waters in assigning under the State protection those historical monuments that had not been given this honour. So far our activities concerned the building of old Kazakh drama theatre, located in the Old town of Karaganda. However, our plans are more ambitious, they include Bronze age monuments and Turkic stone statues, as well as remains of the Russian fortifications and Soviet era mines, i.e. all those objects which for some reasons had not been added to the lists of historical and cultural monuments and, therefore, are not a subject to the State protection. Hopefully, our application for financial support of such activities on a substantial scale, submitted for the approval to the US Embassy, will be responded. Then we will be able to open campaign under the working title "History beyond lists" in full force and effect.

Educational courses

In cooperation with Alexander Novikov, a survival specialist, we held our first survival course in the fall of 2012 in the Bugly mountains. This course was, in fact, an introductory one, that is why some blessings of civilization (such as, tents and sleeping bags) were presupposed. However, due to unusually unfavourable weather condition (it was snowing), it turned out to be quite an extreme course. In the beginning of 2013 we are planning to arrange the winter version of the course, preparation of which is now in full force.

English course for travellers "Travel English" is also ready to be launched. The lessons are due in the beginning of 2013 and will be taught by Oxana Shuptar, a full

ther, about fifty Karaganda cyclists proceeded along the central streets of Karaganda city from Victory park in the South-East district to the Square of Independence. They were followed by cars of the road police, whose employees yet again supported the event.

At our suggestion Karaganda authorities start to pay some attention to cycling issues, even though at present they do it in a very particular and somewhat thoughtless way. It is proven by the fact, that the bicycle march was held on Monday morning of June 4th, it was organized with the use of administrative measures and was not of much use for the bicycle infrastructure development. In fact it caused a lot of

negative emotions on the side of cyclists, who had been forced to attend the event, as well as pedestrians and drivers, who had to put up with the traffic, which had been blocked off at the time of the day most inconvenient and least suitable for the holding of such events.

We are also pleased to notify you that this year "Avalon" was granted financing for the further bicycle infrastructure development by the US Department of State. Within the framework of this project we are planning to mount 8-10 bicycle stands in Karaganda, work out Tourist bicycle city map, both paper and electronic versions (in Russian and English), elaborate several bicycle excursions in Karaganda, as well as work out



member of "Avalon".

Mass media, publications, web

Every event in the life of "Avalon" is thoroughly reported in the mass media outlets, be it bicycle festival in Karaganda or survival courses in the nature far from city bustle. Besides, this year "eKaraganda" portal showed a cycle of interviews with the president of HGS "Avalon". Thus users of the portal had a good opportunity to familiarize themselves with the activities of our organization. Our activities are often covered by mass media, especially such Karaganda newspapers as "Noviy vestnik" (together with its Internet news portal) and "Vzglyad na sobitiya".

In 2012 articles and photographs of "Avalon" members were published in the following magazines: "Discovery Horizons" and "Discovery Central Asia" (UK), "Pilgrim", "Elitniy dom" and "Veter stranstviy" (Kazakhstan), "Foreign Policy Research Centre Journal" (India), "Natur" and "Terra" (Germany).

If our application for financial support of our own travel magazine is approved, the world will witness the issue of an unusual for our country non-commercial magazine.

In 2012 after a long break resumed its activities one of our domains, "BackpackING" portal about independent tourism and adventurous traveling.

Expeditions

Expedition activities of "Avalon" in 2012 were mostly concerned with the project on ecological tourism development and by this reason were seldom beyond the scope of the Kyzylarai mountain mass (this had been covered earlier, in section "Tourism development").

Next year we are planning to continue exploration of Central Kazakhstan. Alongside with Kyzylarai, which one may explore endlessly, our plans for the summer of 2013 include Aktau fortification, Uspenskiy mine, Berkara place and other travels



(mostly by bicycle) in the footsteps of Russian and other foreign pioneering explorers of XVIII-XX centuries.

We would like to pay special attention to our plans of repeating the expedition "Bronze ring of Sary-Arka", which was undertaken by our team in 2008. This time we would like to follow the same route (with small additions) and observe the changes in the life of people, living in the depth of the country in Central Kazakhstan, within the last 5 years.

As for more geographically distant plans of ours, we have a trekking expedition "Foot of Makalu" (East Nepal), scheduled for March 2013. In the course of the expedition its participants will follow the roads less traveled from Tumlingtar town to the base camp of one of the Himalayan eight-thousanders.

Other events

In 2012 we resurrected the old custom of holding Traveller's club in Karaganda Ecological Museum. Club meetings, which take place every second Friday, always collect people, who are engaged or interested in traveling and are willing to try their hand at independent traveling one day. In 2012 we welcomed in our club Ruslan Telegin (report on the USA-trip), Boris Kopylov and Sergey Kulakov (report on the bicycle journey in Central Russia), Alexey

and Alexandra Katkov (report on journey to Kashmir) and Vitaliy Shuptar (report on Nepal and tourism opportunities in the country).

In August Rafael de Mestre (Barcelona) on his journey round the world drove through Karaganda on his electronic automobile "Tesla". In September we gladly received another guest – our friend and just a traveller, Diyaz Baiseitov (Astana), who had finished his bike journey around Siberia.

Organizational issues

The number of "Avalon" members has almost doubled, whereas the members' privileges number has greatly increased. Membership fees (they still make 2400 tenge per person annually) help us to cover partially the Society's expenses. In autumn we made a decision about introducing of the new category of "young Avalonians" along with common membership. Such kind of membership is made up for those who are interested in our activities but whose age does not comply with the charter requirements yet (members under 16 years old).

In 2012 we first thoroughly described all the privileges that every "Avalon" member is entitled to. As it seems to me, they all should be enumerated in the present bulletin, too. Thus, aside from the privileges under the

Charter of HGS "Avalon" (Clause 4.4.), all the full and associate members of the Society, as well as all "young Avalonians" are entitled:

- to receive Members Bulletin in printed form;

- to be granted 50% discount upon participating in sporting events and events of other kinds, organized by "Avalon";

- to be granted 10% discount upon paying for the participation in educational courses, arranged by HGS "Avalon";

- to be granted 30% discount upon purchasing printed production, issued and sold by HGS "Avalon" (guidebooks, maps, postcards etc.);

- to be granted 10% discount for booking tours by "Nomadic Travel Kazakhstan" company;

- to be granted 5% discount upon purchasing bicycles, 8% discount upon purchasing other articles and 10% discount upon bicycle and camping equipment rental in "Limpopo Outdoor" shop in Karaganda;

- to be granted 10-15% discount upon purchasing goods and repairing a bicycle in "Bicycle" shop-workshop (Maslennikov's bicycle workshop);

- to use "Avalon" data base (printed and electronic, including GPS treks and waypoints) free of charge.

Along with our website and

bicycle forum for the coordination of our members' activities we extensively use social media, namely Facebook and V Kontakte, where "Avalon" has its own pages. We would like to kindly ask you to use them as often as possible, because they are created first and foremost for providing connections between the Society and its members (present and future ones), as well as for establishing relations between "Avalon" members.



Present bulletin is distributed among members of HGS "Avalon" and young Avalonians in printed form. It is available to the third parties only in the electronic form, which is usually published with a bit of a delay. Just as usual, we would like to kindly ask you to keep us updated about your contact data and notify us about the change of postal address and e-mail in proper time, so that we would be able to deliver you this bulletin, as well as other pieces of information about our Society's activities.

Detailed information about "Avalon"'s activities and its realized projects is available at www.guide.kz, as well as on our Facebook-page: www.facebook.com/avalongeographic and V Kontakte-page: www.vk.com/club27602301

In the issuance of the present bulletin were used the photographs by Vitaliy Shuptar, Natalya Borovaya, Alexandr Yermolyonok, Andrey Kim and Saveliy Kirillov.

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