



Members Bulletin

"Avalon" Historico-geographical Society

year 2014

Editor's note



Dear Avalonians!

We are glad to present to your attention the fourth issue of the annual Members Bulletin, where we as usual do our best to give an account of the activities in which "Avalon" HGS and "Avalon" PF were engaged in 2014, as well as tell you about our mutual achievements, progress and future plans.

ress and future plans.

This passing year has yet again surpassed our wildest expectations and turned out to be quite eventful, which we already see as a good tendency. Expeditions in Central Kazakhstan and the Northern Tien Shan mountains, a couple of cartographic projects, start of the publication of Nepal guidebook, growth and development of VeloKaraganda, establishment of the connections with Pavlodar's Geography House and Stepnogorsk Cyclists club, guests from Russia, Germany, Sweden and the USA, participation in the activities of Kazakhstan National Geographic Society. In a word, the year 2014 proved to be not only an interesting, but also fruitful one

It is good to know that the results of our work are highly evaluated by others. Thus, Kyzylarai and Shabanbai Bi were added to the list of 2014 Sustainable Destinations Global Top 100. Besides, our initiative to launch the Tourist hotline received recognition on the republican level.

In 2014 we had a chance to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the founding of "Avalon". Such anniversaries are very important because they allow us to look back and try to sum up everything that has been done so far and then, after realizing our strength and opportunities, plan for the future, see new prospects and new horizons.

We've achieved a lot but we are capable of doing so much more!

Vitaliy Shuptar
President of
"Avalon" HGS
and "Avalon" PF

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Aksoran mountain, 10th anniversary of Avalon / Sergey Kulakov

Biodiversity and Ecotourism

January 2014 marked the end of the activities on yet another project dealing with tourism development in Kyzylarai and Shabanbai Bi (GEF/UNDP SGP project "Ecotourism in Central Kazakhstan: conservation of the PA natural resources and creation of economic opportunities in the rural areas" which was implemented by "Avalon" PF in cooperation with "Karaganda regional ecological museum" PA, "Nomadic Travel Kazakhstan" company and "Aktogai forest and fauna conservation department" SE). In March, Kyzylarai travel map and guidebook planned within the scope of the project went to press (read more on that below, in the section on "Maps and guidebooks") – by the way, this was the only project activity postponed until 2014. It goes without saying that the end of the project activities does not mean that we will stop working on developing Kyzylarai – on the contrary, it is just the beginning.

Besides, the idea of develop-



ping tourism in Kyzylarai has been receiving approval on the part of the authorities. Consequently, a direct bus service was established between Karaganda city and Shabanbai bi village. There is no doubt that this measure will lead to the increase in the number of tourists. Moreover, updated information on Kyzylarai and Shabanbai Bi was added to the current editions of two popular guide-books, Lonely Planet Central Asia and Kasachstan Entdecken, both of which were released last year. We believe that media trip to Kyzylarai which

took place in September 2014 will be helpful for the ecosite promotion as well. The media trip was organized for the Kazakhstani tour operators and mass media by "Nomadic Travel Kazakhstan" travel company by order of Department of Entrepreneurship of Karaganda region. "Avalon" took part in the organization and management of this event. Unfortunately, bad weather conditions did not allow us to show the mountain range and its vicinities in their full splendor (due to a mix of heavy rain and snow we could not ascend Aksoran mountain). However, media trip participants were left with good impressions.

Considering our long years of working in Kyzylarai and Shabanbai Bi, we were especially pleased to learn that this place had become the only place in Kazakhstan (and one of the two in Central Asia, along with the Pamir mountains in Tajikistan) to be added to the list of 2014 Sustainable Destinations Global Top 100. This nomination was



Snow leopard, Northern Tien Shan / Saltore Saparbayev

established by "Travel-Mole.com", "Vision on Sustainable Tourism", "Totem Tourism" and "Green Destinations" in order to recognize the attempts of developing the most sustainable travel destinations in the world. The final list of nominees is the result of open vote in social networks as well as the selection procedures in which 30 experts had been involved. Thus, international experts in the field of tourism development acknowledge the fact that our way of developing tourism in Kyzylarai gradually and "softly" is the only reasonable and justified one. We would like to express our gratitude to "Green salvation" ecological society and Dagmar Schreiber, an expert in tourism development, for nominating Kyzylarai and Shabanbai Bi for the participation in 2014 Sustainable Destinations Global Top 100!

"Avalon" continues to work on biodiversity protection and ecotourism development in the Northern Tien Shan mountains. You will recall that this is done in the framework of the project "Biodiversity protection in the transboundary region "Northern Tien Shan mountains" which will have been implemented until the end of 2016. This project is implemented in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in cooperation with Nature and biodiversity conservation union of Germany (NABU), its affiliated branch in Kyrgyzstan, Rural Development Fund of Kyrgyzstan (RDF) and Association for the conservation of biodiversity of Kazakhstan (ACBK) with the financial support of Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany (BMZ).

Flora and fauna monitoring in the framework of this project has been carried out in cooperation with ACBK. In the fall of 2014 project specialists mounted trail cameras in the territory of National Park "Kolsai Kolderi". Positive results were not long in coming: soon after that snow leopard was caught on one of the



Workshop in Kurmety village / Vitaliy Shuptar

cameras. The trail cameras were also mounted in the territory of Ile-Alatau National Park. At the present time we are working out the methodological recommendations for flora and fauna monitoring in the project territories. In the framework of the project a meeting was organized between the employees of Chon-Kemin Nature park and specially protected natural areas (SPNA) of Kazakhstan in order to enable exchange of ideas and experience between the two parties. During the meeting guests from Kyrgyzstan paid a visit to Almaty Nature Reserve and National park "Kolsai Kolderi". Management effectiveness in the SPNA National Park "Kolsai Kolderi" was evaluated by means of

Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT). Project specialists also participate in animals record keeping.

With regard to ecotourism development in the territory of Ile-Alatau National Park, we made a decision to limit the scope of our activities to its affiliated branch in Turgen, which we consider the most prospective and sustainable one. Here we are planning to reconstruct the ranger cabins which will later be used by the National Park administration for accommodating tourists, as well as develop nature trails and other infrastructures (throughout the year we have done some preparations for it). In 2014 Facebook page for Ile-Alatau SNNP was created. National



Issyk Lake, Northern Tien Shan / Vitaliy Shuptar



protected natural areas (SPNA)", drawn up by Centre for Remote Sensing and GIS "Terra" for their possible implementation and application in all SPNAs of Kazakhstan in future.

We would like to honour our volunteers from Kazakhstan, Georgiy Markovskiy and Valeriy Kharitonov, as well as the ASA-programme volunteers from Germany, Gregor Qualitz and Katja Voigt, for their assistance in the field work in the Northern Tien Shan. Just as before, next year we are hoping to get some extra help from volunteers who love mountains and traveling, since the realization of a wide range of planned activities without any help from outside does not seem possible.

In September 2014 "Avalon" PF participated in CAMP Forum 2014 on "Community-based Ecotourism as Driving Force of the Mountain Communities Development in Central Asia", organized by "CAMP Alatau" PF with the financial support of the Principality of Liechtenstein, NABU, GIZ and the Mountain Partnership. The forum addressed the prospects and challenges of the community-based ecotourism development in Central Asia. It also highlighted the activities (implemented as well as planned ones) of NABU and "Avalon" PF

Park management plan as well as the passports of available tourist routes are currently revised.

In the Kolsai segment of the project territory we decided to focus on the Kurmety gorge, where a village of the same name is located. In our opinion, this village presents unique opportunities for accommodating tourists in close proximity to nature. That is where we organized a workshop on ecotourism development with the help of Yevgeniy Klimov (Foundation for Integration of Ecological Culture). In early 2015 we are planning to organize workshops for the locals who would like to work in

the field of tourism. These workshops will enable them to acquire the skills of managing guest-houses and working as guides as well as help to gain some basic knowledge of legal, financial and other practical matters. Hopefully, by the next season villagers will be ready to accommodate and serve their first tourists.

In the fall of 2014 we evaluated recreational load on two nature trails in the Ile-Alatau and "Kolsai kolderi" National Parks. These activities were carried out within the approbation of "Methods of evaluation of the acceptable tourism carrying capacity and recreational loads on specially

8-800-080-7212

hotline



calls are free of charge and can be made from every landline in Kazakhstan, as well as from mobile phones provided by all Kazakhstani mobile operators

on biodiversity conservation and ecotourism development in Central Kazakhstan and the Northern Tien Shan mountains.

We would like to mention a few other events concerned with tourism development in Kazakhstan in which "Avalon" took part in 2014, namely "Youth tourism: volunteers and business" meeting (Almaty, January 2014), meeting in the Tourism industry department regarding the development of Road tourism map (Astana, September 2014), "At the foot of Ulytau" conference (Astana, December 2014), as well as tourism exhibitions in Almaty and Astana. We also participated in the discussion of Concept of cultural policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan in what concerns tourism. In September we also visited the "Day of the Irtysh" organized by our friends, Pavlodar's Geography House. By the way, we hope that this event will catch on and be held regularly and on a larger scale, since the Kazakhstan tourism really needs such events.

As for tourism development in Karaganda, we would like to mention another project of ours which is implemented in the framework of the activities on the bicycle infrastructure and tourism development in Karaganda with the financial support of the US Department of State. In the fall of 2014 we started to equip some of the Karaganda city sights with

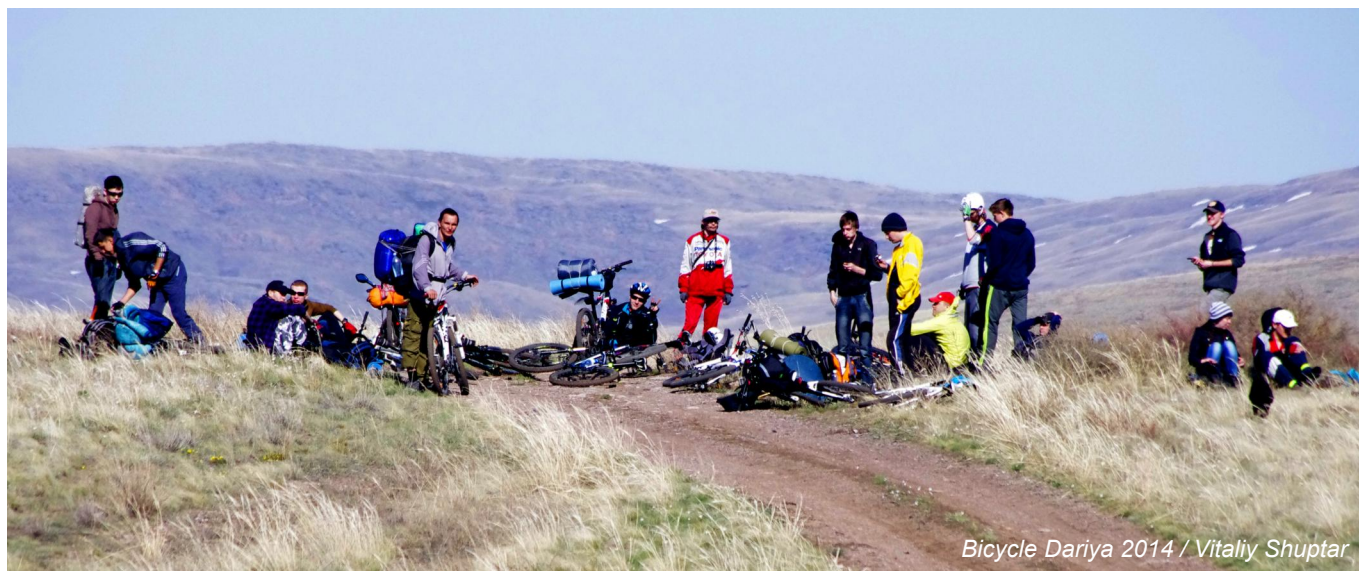
small sign plates containing QR-code symbols and a trilingual caption "Tourist information". With the help of any smartphone app capable of scanning these codes, you may get access to the respective page on our website dedicated to the city sight located next to you. On this page you will be able to find information (in Russian and English) on history of this point of interest and on people who were involved in it, as well as a few photos of the city sight taken in different periods of the city's history. Next year we are planning to continue working in this direction.

In the summer of 2014 Tourist hotline in Central Kazakhstan was put into operation (it is, in fact, one of the components of our long-planned Tourist information centre). Since that time everyone who is interested in tourism in Karaganda and Karaganda region may reach "Avalon" team at 8-800-080-7212 and get all the necessary information on the subject (also in English). The hotline operates daily except for holidays from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Calls are free of charge and can be made from every landline in Kazakhstan, as well as from the mobile phones provided by all Kazakhstani mobile operators. In 2014 maintenance of the hotline was financed by Department of Entrepreneurship of Karaganda region. Although there is no certainty whether or not the

hotline will be further financially supported in 2015, we are planning to keep it up and running. Accordingly, we will search for the financial means for this project implementation.

Just as before, we are trying to promote the travel potential of Kazakhstan with the help of publications of various kinds. Last year the photos taken by our members were used in the photo album about Karaganda region, issued by Nugebekova PE. Moreover, our texts and photos formed the basis of the photo book "100 experiences of Kazakhstan", yet another edition published by "Silk Road Media". Next year a photo book about Ulytau will go to press and our photos will be on its pages, too. During 2014 our materials were used in the following editions: "Veter Stranstviy", "Mir Puteshestviy" and "Industrialnaya Karaganda" (Kazakhstan), "Steppe bulletin" (Russia) and "SilverKris" travel magazine (Singapore). Our activities in the field of tourism were also highlighted in several interviews ("Halyktravel.kz" website, "DispatchNewsDesk" and "eKaraganda" news portals).

We are not giving up on the idea of developing Traveller's passport of Kazakhstan, as well as continue pondering on the event tourism development in Kyzylarai oasis. We do not lose the hope of finding funding for the



Bicycle Dariya 2014 / Vitaliy Shuptar



Bicycle Dariya 2014 / Vitaliy Shuptar

issue of our own non-profit magazine about tourism and traveling and, thus, go on searching for such opportunities.

VeloKaraganda

Through our efforts and not only, Karaganda as well as its satellite towns have become much more cyclist-friendly. Being realists, we understand that we still have a long way to go before bicycle lanes will appear in our city. However, last year following the request of Department of natural resources and environmental management we made our recommendations to city authorities regarding the first steps in bicycle infrastructure development. Be that as it may, the number of cyclers as well as

bicycle-related venues (such as bicycle shops, bicycle rentals, bicycle workshops, as well as bicycle stands, more information on which you may find further) in Karaganda has been increasing considerably. By the way, "Veter stranstviy" magazine has recently published the article about the role of "Avalon" in the bicycle community and infrastructure development in Karaganda, as well as our traditional events and plans.

Bicycle tourism season was traditionally opened in Dariya, where our members had a chance to ride and wheel their bikes through the wet steppe. In late May "Avalon" co-organized the mass bicycle ride initiated by "eKaraganda" portal and dedi-

cated to the Asian Cycling Championship in Karaganda. Some of our members actively participated in the event. On that same day but a bit earlier, three other members of "Avalon", Kairat Yeleusizov, Sergey Savin and Nikolay Zakharchuk teamed up with two more cyclers from Karaganda on an even more challenging sporting project, "Kar Around" bicycle ride. Having intended to ride along the perimeter of Karaganda city, they covered 86 kilometers within 4,5 hours.

On June 8, 2014 the 7th annual bicycle festival "Karaganda VeloCity" was held. It was organized by "Avalon" in cooperation with Department of natural resources and environmental management of Karaganda region, Department of culture and leisure parks of Karaganda region, "Limpopo Karaganda" store, "Bicycle" store, "Berezyaki" spa resort and "Pyatyy ugol" music club. "Redbull" provided the "energetic support" of the festival, whereas "eKaraganda" portal became the event's media partner. Numerous volunteers helped us in the organization and management of the festival.

52 guys and 10 girls took part in the adult competition and 25 children participated in the children's contest. The first places were taken by Zarina Nurumzhanova (Group F16), Zhanna Brel (Group F16+),



Karaganda-VeloCity 2014 / Alexandr Budko

Adil Khan Baybolov (Group M16) and Ivan Kuznetsov (Group M16+). We also received some special guests from Astana who rode their bicycles all the way to Karaganda: Aset Kusainov, Vitaliy Mikhailov, Dastan Moldabekov and Andrey Kuzmin (the latter became "Avalon" member a while later).

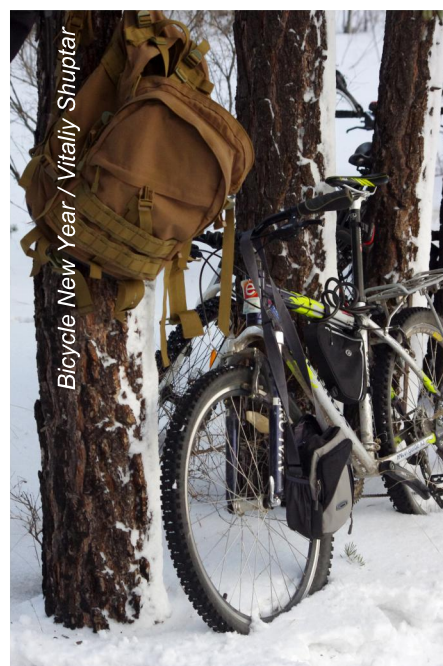
Unfortunately, organization of the latest bicycle festival made us realize the true attitude of the Karaganda authorities towards the whole "bicycle culture topic". More than once they tried to convince us (with no success) to change the format of the event and replace it with something completely different, something only the government authorities could benefit from. They refused to provide us with the opportunity of holding the traditional bicycle march in the city streets (in fact, city administration simply banned it). We were also constantly bothered during the event in the park: they kept asking us if we had the right to hold such an event. Because of all this, our plans regarding the organization and holding of another VeloCity in 2015 are not quite clear yet. We would certainly like to make it happen, but we don't want to run up against a lot of opposition from the city and regional administrations, who are not interested in bicycle culture development at all (unless they have to obey orders from above).

Due to the lack of time and resources, we decided not to hold the cross-country bicycle race "Avalon-Trophy" this year. Some objective circumstances forced us to cancel the bicycle race in the Karkaraly mountains as well. Hopefully, next year all these traditional events of ours will be held as scheduled. Be that as it may, some Karaganda locals, including a few members of "Avalon", had a chance to participate in the bicycle-related sporting events such as "Temirtau Iron Mount Super-D 2014" bicycle race organized by "Storm" bicycle club in Temirtau



and "KTL cross-country 2014" organized by Vitaliy Mikhailov in Astana.

The bicycle project which has been implemented by "Avalon" with the support of the US Department of State since 2012, has come to an end (you will recall that it was aimed at mounting of the additional bicycle stands, bicycle excursions elaboration and creation of Tourist bicycle city map of Karaganda, supplemented with QR-codes). Another 7 bicycle stands appeared in Karaganda city as a result of this project. Some of the city sights were equipped with the QR-codes sign plates (you may have read more on that in the section on Tourism). Tourist bicycle city map



One more new bicycle stand in Karaganda / Vitaliy Shuptar



Ulytau expedition team in Aibas-Darasy place

of Karaganda was printed in Russian and English (you may read more on that in the section on Maps and guidebooks). Several bicycle tours in Karaganda were elaborated in the framework of the project (with duration from 2 hours to all day long). Their descriptions as well as the respective routes may be found on the map as well as on our website. It is worthy of note, that most of these tours take place in the Karaganda old town, since most of the Karaganda locals are not familiar with that area at all.

At least 6 more bicycle stands appeared in Karaganda last year, apart from the ones mounted with our help earlier.

There has been no marked increase in the number of participants of our cycling forum (only 20 new participants, thus

424 participants all in all as of end 2014). We assume, this is because many members of the Karaganda cycling community joined our groups on social networks and actively use them for communication. Besides, the cyclers of Karaganda actively organize their own networks: thus, last year a lot of new (and quite active) bicycle-related communities appeared on V Kontakte.

We celebrated the end of 2014 by going on a fun bicycle ride which was then followed by a festive picnic in the forest not far from Karaganda (there were not so many people present, but it was still very nice).

Expeditions

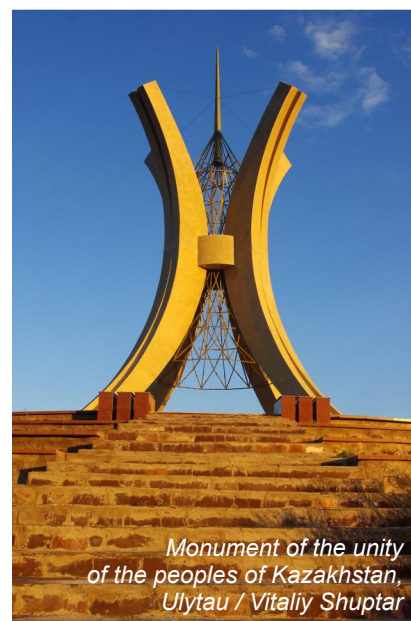
Expedition activities of "Avalon" in 2014 were mostly

concerned with the project on ecological tourism development and biodiversity conservation in the Northern Tien Shan mountains (you may have read about it earlier). Our efforts are now focused on "Kolsai Kolderi" National Park and affiliated branch of Ile-Alatau National Park in Turgen.

In the summer of 2014 "Avalon" HGS participated in the complex expedition of Kazakhstan National Geographic Society (KNGS) to Ulytau. Our team was responsible for the segment concerned with tourism development in the region. Mountain routes to Auliye and Yedyge peaks were explored in the course of the expedition. About 30 historic and cultural sites have been explored, evaluated with regard to tourism



Tamdy rock carvings, Ulytau / Vitaliy Shuptar



Monument of the unity of the peoples of Kazakhstan, Ulytau / Vitaliy Shuptar



Akzhar mountains, Ulytau / Vitaliy Shuptar

attractiveness and thoroughly described. Natural sights were also not left forgotten, among those the Akzhar chalk mountains proved to be the most interesting one. Materials collected in the course of the expedition were used for creating Ulytau travel map (you may read about it in the section on "Maps and guidebooks"). We are also happy to announce that the KNGS took the decision to hold Ulytau expedition regularly. Thus, we hope that next year the members of "Avalon" HGS will take part in the field works again. By the way, on our website you may find the whole collection of the videos shot during the expedition except for (for now) a full two-part documentary from "Unexplored Kazakhstan" series which will be released in early 2015.

One of the most interesting thematic bicycle trips taken by us in 2014 was a three-day-long ride to the area of Sarysu coal-preparation plant and Uspenskiy mining camp in the footsteps of Russian (and not only) pioneering explorers, mineralogists and industrialists. In our opinion, this theme is quite a perspective one (also for elaborating the respective interesting tourist products) and we are planning to organize such bicycle rides and camping trips in 2015.

Within 2014 members of "Avalon" took part in several interesting expeditions, organized by other communities in Karaganda, including such groups as "Living boring is harmful" and "Autotourist.KZ". By doing so they traveled in Central and Eastern Kazakhstan extensively.

We are still planning (and so is the Kazakhstan National Geographic Society) to carry out "The Jade Gate" expedition (now scheduled for 2015). It will start in mid-August in Karaganda and end in late September in Yumenguan, China, as a result of 3200 km of traveling. The final composition of the expedition team will be made public in March. Every member of "Avalon" HGS may apply for participating in the expedition. However, one should bear in mind that those of its members whose participation may be beneficiary for the outcome of the expedition will be chosen. We are also starting to plan the bicycle expedition following the route of one of the journeys by Pyotr Semenov-Tyan-Shanskiy (scheduled for 2016).

We still haven't been able to summarize the expedition to the Malaysian part of the Borneo island undertaken in December 2013 in the footsteps of a Russian traveler and writer, Peter Goullart. Hopefully, we will be able to do that in 2015.

Maps and guidebooks

In 2014 we elaborated and printed two tourist maps-schemes which are designed to make traveling in Central Kazakhstan easier and more enjoyable. They are Kyzylarai and Ulytau maps that were printed in the framework of two different projects, but with similar concepts and design. Hopefully, they will start the



Sarysu coal-preparation plant ruins / Vitaliy Shuptar

whole series of cartographic products of this kind. Upon working on these maps, we tried to follow the principle that a map should be like a mini-guidebook: it should not only tell you how and where to go, but also why you should do that.

In March 2014 Kyzylarai Tourist Map-Scheme was published. It had been elaborated by "Avalon" PF in the framework of the second stage of the GEF/UNDP SGP project "Ecotourism in Central Kazakhstan: conservation of the PA natural resources and creation of economic opportunities in the rural areas". This map-scheme includes the map of the central part of the mountain range, plans of Aktogai and Shabanbai Bi, situational scheme of Kyzylarai tourist sights, as well as some useful information for travelers (public transport timetables, useful contacts, some basic Kazakh vocabulary helpful for orientation, etc.). The map was published in two languages: English and Russian. In the framework of the above mentioned project we also printed Kyzylarai guidebook in Russian and Kazakh aimed at local guides. It is a special edition rather than something which is made for general public. Hopefully it will help us to train a group of people in making excursions of various topics and duration in Kyzylarai area.

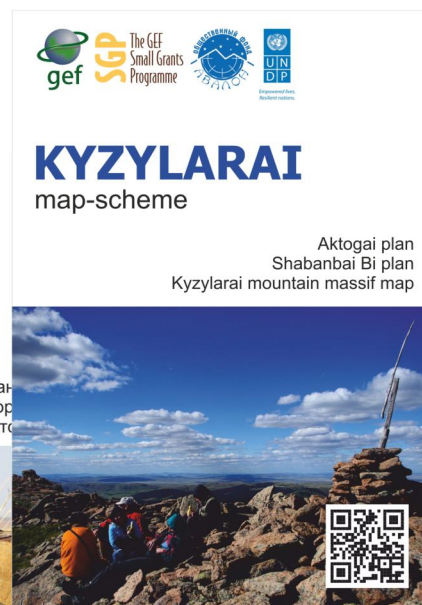
Ulytau map-scheme elaborated by "Avalon" HGS based on the results of the respective expedition of the KNGS and by order of KNGS was presented in early November 2014. Pocket-size edition includes the map of the Ulytau mountain range, Ulytau village plan, an overview scheme of tourist attractions located in the region, as well as some useful information for travelers (public transport timetables, useful contacts, descriptions and photos of the most symbolic tourist sights). The map



was printed in three languages: Kazakh, English and

Russian. It is worthy of note that we already began preparations for developing Ulytau guidebook (scheduled for 2015).

Bicycle map-scheme of Karaganda was printed towards the end of the year in the framework of the project on bicycle culture development in Karaganda funded by the US Department of State. It is a new experience for us and we hope it hasn't turned out too bad. This edition includes the plan of Karaganda city centre as well as an overview map of the whole city. There is also infor-



mation on the bicycle shops and workshops located in the city, tourist routes that run through Karaganda,

as well as a lot of information which may be helpful for a bicycle tourist, as well as any tourist who came to Karaganda. The pocket-size map-scheme was printed in Russian and English.

We should note that last year we worked a lot on providing Google Maps with cartographic information on Kyzylarai, Ulytau and Karaganda. Wikimapia comes next.

In the end of 2014 we launched another project which will hopefully make the lives of independent travelers a lot



Camp nearby the Konysbay mountains / Vitaliy Shuptar

easier. Here we are referring to the on-line guidebook Avalon-TravelGuides/Nepal in Russian. You may have already familiarized yourself with some of its chapters which we began posting on our web-site in November. This guidebook is designed in the way that one may access it on-line on our website as well as at the times when internet connection fails (pdf-files of A5 format are available on the website for download, they may be used on mobile devices as well as printed out). By the way, we would like to invite to cooperation all the members of "Avalon" as well as other people who are interested in Nepal and know this country well (for now, as volunteers) in order to further improve our guidebook.

Our anniversary

About half a year before the anniversary approached, we started to post the photos on our pages in social networks telling about the last ten years spent mostly on the road.

It is no surprise that we also celebrated the 10th anniversary of "Avalon" in the nature, far from the city. To be exact, we also had a company party in the office but it wouldn't have been in our spirit to just stop at it. That is why some of our members (those who had a chance to leave the hustle and bustle of the city and forget about work for a while) celebrated the great event in the Kyzylarai mountains by climbing up Aksoran peak (consequently we have even got an idea of introducing a special ritual of spiritual initiation for the "Avalon" members in which they must ascend this mountain) and having a great feast in the best guest-house of Shabanbai Bi village.

Our guests

The ASA-programme volunteers, Katja Voigt and Gregor Qualitz, helped us in our activities in Central Kazakhstan and in the Northern Tien Shan Mountains.

In fact, they took an active part in the Ulytau expedition and later assisted us in the region's tourist map design. Later, despite snow and pouring rain, they were engaged in calculating the number of tourists in Turgen gorge. Katja and Gregor (by the way, they later became members of "Avalon") are now expected to represent us and our activities at the tourism trade fair in Berlin (ITB) in March 2015. Besides, we really hope that our paths will cross again in the future.

In 2014 we hosted Traveller's club in Karaganda Ecological Museum three times. In March we welcomed in our club Damir Karimov, an "Avalon" member, traveler and healthy life instructor who told us about the peculiarities of winter hitchhiking, his travels in Kyrgyzstan and experience of living in an ecocommunity. In June we received another guest who shares our love for bicycles, Yegor Kovalchuk, a bicycle traveler from Tomsk who visited Karaganda within his expedition "Opening the world". In September a famous artist and traveler, Vladimir Glukhov, visited our city and our club on his way to Tajikistan.

In July 2014 members of American band "Blended 328" visited Karaganda and we properly received the guests by organizing a bicycle city excursion for them (by request of the US



Katja Voigt and Gregor Qualitz / Vitaliy Shuptar

Embassy). Besides, one day before that we had a chance to spend some quality time with them in informal settings.

In the fall of 2014 Karaganda city and "Avalon" welcomed a famous traveler and explorer from Sweden, Mikael Strandberg, and his family. We took him on a trip to Kyzylarai and Shabanbai Bi which resulted in a whole series of interesting publications.

Organizational issues

In comparison with 2013 this year the number of "Avalon" HGS members has increased by 40 per cent (more than twenty new people joined our organization).



Aksoran mountain, Kyzylarai / Alexandr Mikhalyov

However, we will probably have to part with some of our old members who had lost connections with the society and failed to pay membership fees in the last two years.

Just as before, we are trying to expand the list of members' privileges. In 2014 the following privileges were introduced: discounts for purchasing goods in the on-line shop "From-Nepal.KZ" (20%), "Extremal" chain store in Astana (5%), "Splay" store in Almaty (10%) and "World Sport" store in Karaganda (5%). Let us remind you that the full list of members' privileges is as always available on our website.

In 2014 domain space of our main web-resource, www.guide.kz,

was extended considerably. This allows us to intensively use the bicycle forum, as well as develop other sections of the website concerned with tourism, bicycle-related subjects or publishing activities.

Aside from the website and bicycle forum, we continue using social networks, including Facebook (549 subscribers as of end 2014) and V Kontakte (738 subscribers). Our page on Google+ does not show any growth in popularity, but, as we suppose, this is mainly due to the developmental tendencies of this social network. We would like to remind you that our pages on social networks have been mainly created for establishing connections between the society

and its members (present and future ones), as well as for contacts between the members themselves. Thus, we encourage you to make use of the opportunities that they give us.

We also have a special request for all the members of "Avalon" HGS. From time to time we need your support and, by sending the respective e-mails, hope to get some feedback. We also expect you to show more initiative. After all due to us and our actions "Avalon" is what it is, namely the network of like-minded people. We need new ideas, from time to time we need new employees and we are in constant need of volunteers.



Auliye mountain, Ulytau / Vitaliy Shuptar

Present bulletin is distributed among the members and employees of "Avalon" in printed or electronic form (optionally). It is available to the third parties only in its electronic form, which is usually posted with a bit of a delay. Just as usual, we would like to kindly ask you to keep us updated regarding 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" and its realized projects is available at www.guide.kz, as well as on our Facebook-page: www.facebook.com/avalongeographic, V Kontakte-page: www.vk.com/club27602301 and Google+ <https://plus.google.com/110564846475924275058>. We are also on Foursquare: www.4sq.com/17vV0oT and Google Maps (Google Places): <https://plus.google.com/101035541698303947937/about>

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