

NEW SKI RESORT UNDER CONSTRUCTION IN NORTHERN CAUCASUS



In recent years, a federal target program has been allocated substantial funds by the Russian Government. The name of the program is "Development of Domestic and Entry Tourism in the Russian Federation (2011-2018)". The tourists cluster in the Northern Caucasus is among the largest state initiatives.

The concept of the project is based on meeting the increasing demand for affordable recreational destinations in Russia. A state corporation, "Northern Caucasus Resorts" is developing the first mountain resort project called "Arkhyz". **By 2035, the mountain resort is expected to cater to more than half a million of visitors.**

The hidden fact of the project was to convert the war ridden areas into attractive tourist region. The main aim of the project was to stimulate economic growth in the conflict affected areas.

Thousands of jobs are created by developing tourism. The additional benefit of tourism development is setting new standard of service and local culture. It can also attract retail and hotel developers. In addition to these, new cultural and social activities are also created by this tourism development.

The flagship program, Arkhyz is dotted by its mountain profile and natural beauty. The other attractions of the site are nostalgic tour camps and sanatoria and many other well-known sites that include local mineral water. The success of the project owes much to the historical reputation, favorable natural conditions, Government support, an integrated approach and well-recognized name. Besides all these, a number of tricky questions stand as the landmark profile of the very project.

As per some international studies, in Russia only 2.5 to 3.5 percent of population are skiers. Another issue is the access. Most of the ski resorts around the world are accessible by cars. The nearest airport for Caucasus is in Mineralnye Vody, which is more than 2 hour drive away. If an airport can be built nearer to Arkhyz, it would become more attractive for the tourists. However, such decision is still to be made.

Seasonality is the additional issue in the context of increasing Arkhyz's attraction. Russia has a short ski seasons - hardly 5 months. The span of Christmas to New Year celebration in Russia is merely two weeks and this is the time most Russians go for their winter holiday. If the resort wants to attract visitors year-round it needs to adopt flexible price policy and attractive packages.

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