

KAZAKHSTAN TO PROMOTE TOURISM THROUGH THE ASIAN GAMES



The seventh Asian Winter Games will be held in Almaty and Astana in January and February 2011. Kazakh tourism authorities intend to use the prestigious sporting events to capture the interest of the world community as they want to point out the development of country's tourism industry.

In order to attract visitors to the country, Kazakh's top priority is the creation of a competitive and distinctive tourism industry. According to Ms. Karlygash Kaken, the head of the Kazakh Tourism Authority, the Asian Games are a great opportunity for Kazakhstan to attract the attention as a brand new tourism destination. Generally, the Games are a significant project for Kazakhstan as they will take place in two main cities, Astana and Almaty.

During last year, tourism in Kazakhstan grew by 8 percent and reached 4.5 million visitors, however about 80 percent of tourists were in the country on a business trip. Ms. Karlygash Kaken emphasized that **the current target of Kazakh's tourism industry is to support other tourism segments such as eco-tourism, country tourism as well as sport tourism** since tourists from for example Western Europe are interested in adventure tourism and hunting very much. That is why the Kazakh Ministry of Tourism and Sports adopted a comprehensive tourism development program for 2007-2011 which was also approved by President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

In general the government of Kazakhstan has invested significant resources into the development of tourism industry and it has paid off. **At the tourism exhibition in Berlin (ITB 2010), Kazakhstan ranked first in the competition for 'Best Stand' among countries in Asia and the Pacific region**, ahead of for example Malaysia or China. It is not commonly known that Kazakhstan, with an area five times larger than that of France, has the most diverse landscapes with a lot of mountains, lakes and rivers and picturesque coast by the Caspian Sea.

Experts believe that Kazakhstan will have to work hard to attract significant tourist flow. The most eminent challenge for the Kazakh Tourism Authority is **the promotion of Kazakhstan as an attractive and unique tourism destination**. First of all, the country should be promoted among travel trade professionals in the targeted markets of specific travel segments.

Date: 2010-11-15

Article link:

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