



ALTAI PEAKS AND RIVERS

Welcome to the majestic Altai Republic, land of mountains, nomads and heart-stopping adventures. From remote villages to superb ski resorts to pristine caves and mountain lakes, this tour gives you a complete picture of Altai's extraordinary diversity.

The Altai Republic spans a vast 92,500sqm at the junction of the Siberian taiga, the steppes of Kazakhstan and the semi-deserts of Mongolia. A quarter of the Altai Republic is covered in forest, and the region is rich in rivers and lakes, with more than 20,000 tributaries winding their way through the mountains on their northward journey to the Arctic Ocean. The nearest large city is Novosibirsk, an important junction of the Trans-Siberian Railway. Novosibirsk is about 350km from the Altai border, which in Siberian terms, is not particularly far away! This city, the third largest in Russia, is where our adventure begins.

This tour takes place in late winter, the perfect time for enjoying skiing and snowboarding on Altai's pristine slopes. You'll also get to experience adventurous winter activities like dog sledding and snowmobiling in eerily beautiful taiga forests and snow sprinkled meadows. Novosibirsk is a great jumping off point, with its superb restaurants and stately architecture. Our journey is a cultural discovery as well, as we experience both urban and rural Russian life, and the unique traditions of the indigenous Altay people.

TOUR DURATION
13 days / 12 nights

GROUP SIZE
6 -12 people

REGIONS VISITED
Novosibirsk, Altai region

START CITY — END CITY
Novosibirsk — Novosibirsk

SEASON
Winter, December — April

TOUR CATEGORY
Combination tour

PRICE
From US **\$3950***



* price p/person, based on 6 people in the group (twin-share) and will vary less than 6 travelers.

Call us on 1300 742 374 (toll free from Australia) or +61-2-9388-98-16 from the rest of the world, or visit our website www.56thparallel.com



DAY 1: WELCOME TO NOVOSIBIRSK



Our journey to the Altai region begins in Novosibirsk, the largest city in Siberia. We meet at the airport and transfer 365km from Novosibirsk to Belokurikha, a favourite resort for Russian holidaymakers and the gateway to the Altai Republic. This breathtaking journey passes along the banks of two of the great Altai rivers, Biya and Katun. On the way we'll visit the spectacular Swan Lake, which harbours a myriad of bird species in winter, including a vast flock of swans. Our lunch stop is in the city of Biysk, where we enjoy rustic Russian cooking in a cosy, old fashioned cafe. We arrive in Belokurikha in the afternoon and check into Echo, a boutique eco-hotel. Surrounded by majestic pine forest and mountain spurs, it's the perfect place to unwind after our long journey.

MEALS INCLUDED:

—, L, —



DAY 2: BELOKURIKHA — ALTAI'S GATEWAY



A morning driving tour takes us to the main attractions around Belokurikha, including the Church of the Holy Great Martyr. On the grounds are two springs said to contain healing water – locals travel here each day to collect water from the springs. After lunch, **as an option**, we offer you to take a journey by snowmobiles through the winter taiga forest. You will stop at the authentic Russian hut (izba) for snack and warm up by Russian sauna (banya).

MEALS INCLUDED:

B, L, D.

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DAY 3: FREE DAY TO EXPLORE

Today is yours to explore. **As an option**, we offer to you make the most of the awesome winter conditions at Belokurikha with a day of skiing, snowboarding and snow tubing. A variety of trails are on offer for beginners through to hardcore enthusiasts. There are even steep slopes complete with jumps for adrenaline-seeking tube riders! Or enjoy a relaxing couple of hours in Belokurikha's superb spa and wellness centre. The complex offers high quality contemporary facilities, a 27 metre indoor swimming pool with a whirlpool and cascade shower, a fitness room and a range of soothing and indulgent spa and massage treatments. Afterwards, we reconvene for dinner at Pyatoe Koleso, a family run restaurant specialising in charcoal grilled meats. The restaurant has great views of Mount Tserkovka and serves a diverse menu of European, Russian and Japanese cuisine.

MEALS INCLUDED:
B, L, D.



DAY 4: LIFE IN A SIBERIAN VILLAGE

We take a morning drive out to Altayskoe village, famous for producing delicious cheeses. In between tastings of this superb local product, we'll peer into the local museum. Located in the house of the forester, the museum details the lives of the first settlers of the Altai region and features a 250 to 300 year old boat brought up from the bottom of Lake Aya. Afterwards, we check into a local resort, Leso-otel, and enjoy a leisurely lunch. The afternoon is dedicated to an excursion to Taldinskies Caves, one of the most impressive cave complexes in Altai. Venture through narrow passages that open up into magnificent underground palaces. After dinner, we offer as an option, indulge in a traditional Russian banya (sauna) experience. This uniquely Russian form of relaxation includes the social experience of a communal bathhouse and an invigorating roll-around in the snow afterwards!

MEALS INCLUDED
B, L, D.

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DAY 5: KATUN RIVER



This morning we drive along the Katun River, passing through some of the finest mountain scenery Altai has to offer. We break for a picnic lunch in the forest, then continue on our way to Mount Veselaya. Here, locals and tourists enjoy the high speed fun of sliding on mats down a steep 100 metre ice hill, complete with banked turns – thrills and spills guaranteed! We return to Altayskoe in the early evening in time for dinner at the hotel.

MEALS INCLUDED:
B, L, _.



DAY 6: IMMERSE IN ETHNIC CULTURE



More winter wilderness adventures await us today – this time, *as an option*, a dog sledding safari along Lake Manzherok. We start with a meet and greet session with our beautiful Siberian huskies. Meet the handlers and learn mushing techniques that will allow you to glide with ease through ice and snow – no engine noise, just the light footfall and the breath of the huskies as you make your way through the taiga. The Lake Manzherok region is surrounded by pine-birch forest and is a refuge for unique and endangered flora and fauna. We return to our hotel in time for lunch, before an afternoon cultural experience in Altayskoe village. Learn about the life and culture of the indigenous Altay people who reside here. We'll hear ancient songs from master throat singers and take a class on playing the Khomus – a prehistoric Siberian folk instrument. We'll also cook and taste some traditional Altay food, before returning to our hotel for dinner.

MEALS INCLUDED:
B, _ , _.

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DAY 7: ATTRACTIONS OF CHEMAL

This morning we transfer to Chermal, a scenic village and the jumping off point for a huge number of natural attractions in the Altai region. On the way, we stop in at the Museum of Russian Dolls. This realm of puppetry, artistry and ethnography houses 200 rare dolls from around the country. You'll have the opportunity to make your own doll under the guidance of a skilled local craftsman. Our second stop-off involves a short hike to the Blue Lakes. Dark green pine trees in snow-white winter plumage frame these petite lakes, dressed in an amazingly rich deep blue. We arrive at our resort in Chermal in time for lunch, and a tour around the village and its thickly forested surrounds. We visit Patmos Island, a spectacular craggy island in the middle of the Katun River, accessible by footbridge from Chermal.

MEALS INCLUDED:

B, _.



DAY 8: ALTAI'S MAGIC

Today, we travel on horseback (or by car) to the Bertkinsky Pass. The beginning of the route runs along the Katun River then veers off to the pass. From the top, we're treated to a sublime view of the Katun Valley. We stop for lunch at a hunter's hut in the forest, then continue on by car to Chec-shysh Gorge. Here, you'll be left breathless by one of the most spectacular aerial views of the Altai Mountains – its rivers, waterfalls and villages. In the evening, we return to Chermal to visit one of the renowned 'Places of Power' on the resort grounds. These fabled places are said to possess an unusual, healing energy that sometimes causes spontaneous outbursts of emotion. Both travellers and locals claim to have had profound experiences in these places. After dinner, as an option, you'll enjoy an invigorating banya and snowbathing session.

MEALS INCLUDED:

B, L, _.

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DAY 9: THE GOLDEN LAKE



We check out after breakfast and depart Chermal for the 250km drive to Teletskoye Lake, one of the largest and most picturesque lakes in Altai. In the local language, its name is 'Altyn-Kul', or the golden lake. Many locals believe that if you cannot truly experience Altai without visiting this revered mountain lake. We check into our lakeside hotel, Artybash, in time for a late lunch and a few hours to relax and take in the scenery. The hotel is located at the entrance to a local village with stunning views of the 'Pearl' Mountain, the Biya River and the surrounding forest.

MEALS INCLUDED:

B, _ , _.



DAY 10: TAIGA FOREST



Today we make the most of our magnificent wintery surroundings with a morning journey by a horse-drawn sleighs, and as an option, we offer cross-country skiing for this route. On the way we pass through tiny villages and visit the Altai's people of the Taiga. We stop for a rest and lunch in a cosy village home. Rest of your day you can spend as you wish to.

MEALS INCLUDED:

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DAY 11: FROZEN WONDERS



After breakfast, we set off on a trek to the Oyrok River. This small mountain river consists of a series of waterfalls. In winter, it's a truly amazing site, with its frozen cascades and blue and white blocks of crystal clear ice shimmering in the sunlight. We return to Lake Teltskoye in the afternoon for lunch. After our meal, we check out of our hotel and transfer to the Altay Resort. This charming wilderness retreat is made up of several wood cabins, set between an elk farm and a vast forest of cedar and larch, surrounded by spectacular mountain ranges. The on-site restaurant serves superb Russian cuisine, and all produce is grown in the fields adjacent to the resort. Enjoy a hearty dinner of fresh hot bread, smoked sausages and other rustic local delights.

MEALS INCLUDED:

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DAY 12: FREE DAY TO ENJOY & RELAX



This day of our Altai journey, we offer to stay at the best resort in this area and unwind before trip back to Novosibirsk. Or continue to explore surroundings and **as an option** for this morning, we offer a 4 hour snowmobile excursion to the Karakol Lakes. This stunning national monument is a magnet for tourists and photographers. Seven separate mountain lakes are connected by a system of channels and streams, with different shades of green and blue reflecting the winter sunlight. The lakes are surrounded by fragrant pine forests which eventually fade into rolling mountain meadows. Bizarre and beautiful caves and rock formations frame the lakes – some of them even have their own names, such as the 'Castle of the Mountain Spirits'. Or spend whole day resting and enjoying in a soothing banya or one of the luxurious herbal treatments at the hotel spa.

MEALS INCLUDED:

B, —, —.

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DAY 13: TIME TO SAY GOODBYE

After breakfast, we check out of the Altay Resort and start on our journey back to Novosibirsk. We pass through majestic mountain, steppe and taiga landscapes before our lunch stop in the city of Biysk. We arrive back in Novosibirsk by late evening.

MEALS INCLUDED

B, _ _

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BELOKURIHA / ECO-HOTEL «ECHO»

Surrounded by the majestic taiga forest, next to a crystal clear mountain stream, the four eco-friendly cabins of Echo Retreat provide a wonderfully quiet escape in Altai's Belokurikha ski region. The harmony of architecture and landscape here is alluringly apparent, providing the perfect opportunity for guests to relax their mind and body at the end of each day.



ALTAISKOYE VILLAGE/ «LESOTEL» RETREAT

Lesotel Retreat is a unique hotel situated in a picturesque location on the banks of the Katun River. Designed for guests seeking a private stay, surrounded by nature and superb outdoor recreation, Lesotel offers an alluring combination of high end service and a sense rural comfort. This boutique getaway consists of six cedar cottages, well away from any roads so the only noise you'll hear as you drift to sleep are the gentle sounds of the river and the rustling of ancient pines.



CHEMAL VILLAGE/ ECO-HOTEL «MARYIN OSTROV»

The Maryin Ostrov eco-resort offers a touch of luxury for those looking for a relaxing, comfortable stay in the beautiful Chermal Valley, Altai. The unique architectural structure of the hotel is designed to make the most of the dramatic scenery of the Gorny Altai mountain range. The rooms and suites are surrounded by gardens with outdoor lounge areas, gaezbos and an observation deck overlooking the river. The Chermal Valley is famous for its mild, healing climate, perfect for rest and relaxation all year round.



TELETSKOE LAKE / HOTEL «ARTYBASH»

Hotel Artybash is located at the entrance to Artybash village, surrounded by century-old pine trees and is just 400 metres from the jewel of the Altai Mountains, Lake Teletskoye. The hotel offers great views of the Biya River and the majestic mountains beyond. Nestled on a hectare of landscaped grounds, this boutique retreat accommodates just 30 guests and offers picnic and BBQ areas, as well as a Russian bathhouse with access to the river.



URLU-ASPAK VILLAGE / RETREAT «ALTAY RESORT»

This superb nature resort is hidden away from the tourist centre of Altai in a picturesque location just outside Gorno-Altai township. Tucked into a hidden valley and surrounded by mountain ranges, the resort is set amid lush forests of pine and larch. Here you can enjoy the atmosphere of wild nature and the vital energy of the Altai Mountains. Altay Resort offers unique opportunities for recreation and rest with a modern healing and wellness centre, guided visits to protected areas and a range of environmentally friendly products.

INCLUSIONS

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Group airport transfers
- Accommodation
- Meals as specified
- Transport on tour
- Experiences detailed in the itinerary:
 - Swan Lake visit
 - Excursion of Belokurikha
 - Ski lift tickets to Terkovka Mount in Belokurikha
 - Cheese degustation and museum visit in Altaiskoye village
 - Taldinskiye caves excursion
 - Programm at ethno-village with cooking-class
 - Doll museum visit
 - Excursion in Chermal village
 - Visit to indigenous people in Taiga forest
 - Horse sled excursion
 - Tretya rechka excursion
- Entry fees to all attractions
- English speaking guide
- Russian visa support letter

NOT INCLUDED

- International flights
- Insurance
- Visa fees
- Optional experiences:
 - snowmobiling excursion
 - dog-sledding experience
 - horse trekking to Birulinsky Pass
 - cross-country skiing experience
 - Russian banya experience
- Tips

SUMMARY ACCOMMODATION, TRANSPORT AND MEALS

TRANSPORT

- Private car

ACCOMMODATION

- 3 nights at the «Echo» eco-hotel in Belokurikha
- 3 nights at the «Lesotel» eco-hotel in Altaiskoye village
- 2 nights at the «Mariyn Ostov» eco retreat in Chermal village
- 2 nights at the «Artibash» hotel at Teletskoye lake
- 2 night at the «Altay Resort» eco-retreat in Urlu-Aspak village

MEALS

- 10 breakfasts
- 5 lunches
- 2 dinners

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VISAS AND PERMITS

All foreigners require a valid Russian visa to visit Russia for tourist purposes. For most travelers, a tourist visa (single or double entry is valid for a maximum of 30 days from date of entry) is what you will attain.

Getting a Russian visa involves 3 easy steps: Invitation, Application and Registration.

Please note, if you book a tour with us, we will supply you the Visa support document, FREE OF CHARGE.

* In case you just need a support document without a tour itinerary, the simplest, most comprehensive guide to [getting a russian visa is here](#).

INSURANCE

You must have medical travel insurance to travel with 56th Parallel. You'll need to supply details of your travel insurance policy to your tour group leader before embarking on your Russian adventure. It's extremely important that your chosen policy covers all aspects of the trip you're undertaking. We recommend contacting your insurance provider for advice if you're not sure which policy to take out.

LOCAL TOUR LEADERS

56th Parallel employ local Russian tour leaders, guides and drivers. This way, we're able to provide much-needed jobs within Russia's fledgling tourism industry, while our guests benefit from our guides' intimate knowledge of the regions we visit. All our key staff are English speaking, and we absolutely encourage you to engage them with your questions and cultural comparisons. A great rapport with your tour leader goes a long way to making your holiday experience truly memorable.

TIPPING

Tipping of guides, drivers and hotel/restaurant staff is up to your discretion. While it's not considered compulsory in Russia, a tip of 5-10% is reasonable if you're happy with the service provided. Tipping is common in restaurants and makes up a significant part of the take-home pay for wait staff.

RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL

At 56th Parallel we are firm believers in sustainable tourism and responsible travel. Our tours and tour leaders are committed to an environmentally and culturally sensitive approach to visiting wilderness areas and local communities. Please visit our Sustainable Tourism page (<http://www.56thparallel.com/how-we-travel-russia/sustainable-tourism/>) for more information.

ABOUT THIS INFORMATION

All information here is provided in good faith and has been compiled with all reasonable care. However, our itineraries and accommodation sometimes have to be adjusted according to booking availabilities, weather conditions and other factors. We do our best to keep all the information on our website and information kits up-to-date, but please be aware that things can change at the last minute. We encourage you to contact our customer service team if there's anything you need to be sure of – we're always happy to help!

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