Back to the USSR

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\textbf{Abstract.} Recently, the problem of tourism development in the Russian Arctic has been raised more and more often. The region is attractive for a variety of tours and excursions, including sea cruises along the Arctic coast of the Barents and White seas, fishing in the open sea, scuba–and ice diving, as well as various excursions to bird colonies. The authors propose to expand the theme of tours and to immerse tourists in the era of the USSR using the objects of socio-cultural and industrial life, preserved in the small town of Pyramid (Pyramiden), Svalbard.

1. Svalbard, or Grumand

The development of tourism in the Arctic has great prospects. The Svalbard archipelago is located between the North Pole and Europe, just at the junction of the borders of the Arctic ocean and the Northern seas (the Greenland, Norwegian and Barents seas).

The archipelago itself is a part of the Norwegian state (according to the Paris Treaty of Svalbard, 1920). However, the states that are participants of this Treaty have the right to conduct commercial and scientific research activities in the archipelago.

The Russian part of Svalbard is a territory on the island of West Svalbard, it occupies an area of 251 km\textsuperscript{2} and includes three coal deposits, mines and urban-type settlements of Barentsburg, Kolsbey, Pyramid and Grumantbyen. This part of Spitsbergen has been explored by Russia since the end of the 15th century. Russian Pomors were the first who came to Grumand, as they called this land, to hunt for walruses and seals. At present Russia is still operating on this territory. Currently, nearly about 600 of our compatriots live there \cite{1, 2}.

The name Svalbard was given by Willem Barents (1550-1594), a well-known Dutch navigator, in 1596. Although these islands had been mentioned as “Holy Russian Islands”, the name given by W. Barents was officially fixed as Russia was not yet significant in the world of maritime powers at that time \cite{3}.

The small town of Pyramid gets its name from the mountain of the pyramid shape which is located on the shore of Petunia and Mimir bays. The settlement is located at a distance of about 120 km from Barentsburg, where the Consulate of the Russian Federation operates. Pyramid is 50 km far from Longyearbyen, the capital of the archipelago and a transport hub with a sea port and airport. At present Grumant and Pyramida are preserved, and all Russian citizens live and work only in Barentsburg (Fig.1).
In Soviet times, the Pyramid had everything a Soviet person needed: a good salary, scarce food, comfortable living conditions, organized cultural leisure - a cultural with a cinema, a library, a sports complex, and even the world's northernmost swimming pool. Initially, the settlement was specially built for coal miners. Coal mining lasted for more than 30 years. During the operation of the mine, a thermal power plant, a port, a garage, three artificial lakes with pure water for drinking, a livestock farm, a greenhouse, and other industrial and social facilities were built for the needs of supporting quite high quality of life. The last tons of coal at Severnaya mine No. 2 were extracted on March, 31, 1998. After that all the objects in the town were preserved [5].

In order to turn the settlement into life and to create a tourist zone there, the “Arkticugol” has restored and overhauled the local hotel, and modernized engineering networks for heating and water supply recently. Two new heat boilers and two new diesel stations have started operating. Besides, three guest houses for tourists have been constructed in the port. As there is no vegetation on the island except moss, they specially brought black earth and frost-resistant grass from the “big land” by two barges. Guides often mention this fact telling tourists that they are on “native Russian land”.

In summer time, a Norwegian ship regularly comes to the local port, because the area around the Pyramid has a high attraction (Fig. 2). It is very attractive to see mountains with glacial waterfalls, valleys with blue lakes and a “Soviet Ghost town” that was built in 1946 - 1956. Also, tourists are attracted by the large Nordenskiold glacier in this area, huge blocks of which break off with a Bang from time to time and continue their independent journey in the form of icebergs. Those who have the opportunity to come here in the spring time, used to admire the “Brocken Ghost” in the mountains - a very interesting and mysterious atmospheric phenomenon, an optical illusion, and a beautiful optical phenomenon in the “Gloria” clouds. In winter it is worth of enjoying the Northern lights.

Figure 1. The Map of Svalbard [4]
2. Tourism in the Arctic archipelago

Svalbard can be compared to the Kostroma region or Khakassia in terms of area. The only thing is that there is a small population there: only 2.7 thousand people on the island, about a fifth of them are Russian – speaking people (Russians and Ukrainians) [7].

The unique nature of the Arctic archipelago contributes to the development of tourism, but there are not so many regular flights to the world’s northernmost airport Svalbard from Oslo and Tromso. You can also get to the island by airplane from Moscow or Saint Petersburg to the Longerbien airport, the capital of Svalbard. It is also possible to get there from Murmansk on a comfortable expedition ship.

Of course, the tours to Svalbard are not a mass products, but they are very promising. Nowadays, such tourist companies as the Center for the Arctic tourism “Grumant”, “JazzTour”, “ITS–Tour”, “Aim–travel”, “FinnEuroTour”, “Sakvoyazh”, etc. organize tours for compatriots, offering snowmobile safaris and trips from 5 to 15 days long by boat.

Grumant Arctic tourism center offers a number of snowmobile tours. [8]

The tour “The tracks of Pomors” (5 days / 4 nights long, the length of 400 km) includes visits and excursions to Longyearbyen, Todalen, Colesdalen, Greendale, Barentsburg, Is-fjord radio, the Cape of Starostin, Greendale, Randalin, Sveagruva, the Poulainglacier, Kasba, Fardale.

The other tour called “The Polar Express” with a duration of 5 days / 4 nights and a length of 500 km in addition to the previous route offers to visit Kolsdalen, Sassendalen, Tempelfjord, the Nordenskjold glacier, Pyramid and the Thun glacier.

The tour “From Svalbard to Grumant” with the duration of 8 days / 7 nights and the total length of the route at about 1000 km offers the tourists to get acquainted with the Lomonosov plateau and the Eastern shore in addition to the previous programs.

The Moscow company “JazzTour” in addition to the programs realized by the Center for Arctic tourism “Grumant” offers a snowmobile tour called “The Polar Express” (5 days / 4 nights and the total length of the route 500 km). The tourists on snowmobiles used to visit Longyearbyen, Kolsbey, the Heer Cape, Barentsburg, the Gren fjord, Is-fjord radio, the Starostin Cape, the lake Linnea, the Congress lake,
the Finnset Cape, Greenford, Advent Dalen, Camelford, the Tun-Brin glacier, the Nordenskiöld glacier, Bay, Petunia and the town of Pyramid.

The “Finn Euro Tour” from Moscow has several tourist products, mostly snowmobile tours. The duration of tours differ. Additionally, they offer visits to the Cape Linnaeus, waterfalls on bride’s Creek, the Congress lake, etc. The price is from 80,000 to 185 000 rubles.

In the archipelago, you can relax from March to September, and from December to February you can experience the complete darkness and enjoy the Northern lights.

The analysis of the responses made by tourists visited Svalbard and represented in the social media network "VKontakte" shows that the impressions they receive in the Arctic archipelago correspond to the cost of travel. At the same time, the programs of the offered tours are aimed at using mainly active forms of recreation or cruises with a visit to the picturesque Is- fjord and the Islands in the North-Western part of Svalbard, where there are the most beautiful landscapes and the best opportunities for meeting polar bears and the other Arctic animals.

3. The project of the “Back to the USSR” tourist product

To increase the demand for Arctic tourism development, first of all for our compatriots, it is necessary to create an unusual tourist product that will allow you to get new impressions from visiting this archipelago. Such a product can be a weekend tour “Back to the USSR”, which will give you the opportunity to immerse yourself in the Soviet atmosphere for better understanding the people who lived in that era and to feel respect for their compatriots who lived and worked in difficult climatic conditions for the sake of coal mining for their country. This tourist product will be of great interest for any audience: both for those people who expect adventures, and for those who like a quiet family vacation in nature.

The proposed project concerns the use of socio-cultural and industrial facilities that have been preserved in the village of Piramida in Svalbard. The extremely low content of microbes, dust and parasites in the air and soil on Svalbard, low biological activity of the environment ensures high safety of both organic and artificial objects and constructions there.

![Figure 3. The infrastructure of Pyramid][9]
Even being abandoned decades ago, some buildings look as if people left them only few days ago. The town has a huge cultural potential. After all, the entire Pyramid is thoroughly saturated with the spirit of the USSR epoch. There is the northernmost bust of Lenin in the center of the town, and there is also a distinctive sign indicating the latitude in which the town is located.

During the conservation of the town, all the equipment in the mine, in the machine shop and in the skinning shop, on farms and vegetable storage was saved, as well as the “London” and “Paris” hostels, the local café and the Cultural center, and the gym are in a pretty good condition. The project intends to restore the use of these objects in accordance with their original meaning. Good-quality buildings built in the USSR are not currently used, they should be deco served and some new tourism centers should be created on their basis.

So it is quite possible to create a Museum of the history of life in the USSR in the cultural center to acquaint tourists with the stages of conquering the Arctic and the life in the Soviet Union. The Museum is an intermediary between the past and future life, it’s a spiritual and sensory world, a conductor of true culture and human achievements. The Museum's exhibits are a cross-section of the life of society during the Soviet era, so they will help preserve the historical memory and allow you to feel like the successors and continuers of the history of our ancestors.

The town has many plaques dedicated to various events of that era, for example, a plaque dedicated to the flight of Yuri Gagarin into space. Therefore, you can create a corner in the Museum dedicated to important events of that era. The Museum should contribute to the formation of Patriotic qualities among compatriots, expanding their horizons and foster cultural interests.

The best form of modern Museum exposition is considered to be an ensemble, all components of which are Museum objects, scientific and auxiliary materials, architectural, artistic and technical means which are subordinated to a single plan, interconnected and coordinated. The Museum exposition should reflect the idea as accurately as possible. Therefore, in the Museum of the Soviet thematic era, all the rooms should recreate the atmosphere of the USSR and embody a separate theme. Furniture, household appliances, household utensils, which are probably located in the former homes of miners who worked in the village can be the Museum's exhibits.

The reader's corner and forms of the pre-existing library still remain. For creating a full-fledged atmosphere, you need to collect books from that time and give them to all tourists who want to stay in the town.

The town has preserved a cinema hall with appropriate equipment and a film library of that period. Tourists can spend evenings of watching nostalgic movie. There will also be an opportunity to organize dance evenings with songs and music of that period. The Grand piano, piano, and balalaika are preserved in the Cultural center, and photos of recent performances staged by amateurs hang on the walls. The complex has a dining room, on the basis of which you can construct a Soviet bar with appropriate drinks and menus.

The gym has preserved sports equipment (skis, exercise equipment, weights, barbells, balls, etc.), which can be used for active sports events.

It is possible to conduct a master class for tourists on skin dressing in the fur shop, where the untouched equipment is still located. You can also use the resources of a machine shop, vegetable storage, or a former farm. All this will make the leisure of tourists very diverse and interesting.

Also on the territory of the town there is the “London” hostel for men, and the “Paris” hostel for women, and between them there was a dining room. The interior of the buildings corresponds to our theme, and in order for making tourists feel the atmosphere of that time, it is possible to preserve the tradition of settling visitors according to the gender and comfort of that period. Men and women will meet for breakfast, where the menu of that time should be revived, and it will allow to create a special atmosphere of Soviet romantic.

The potential of the town is incredibly large. The entire village is imbued with the Soviet era, which you can fully immerse yourself in during the trip. Excursions to the Museum and to the Arctic nature can be supplemented with the organization of active leisure: sledding and skiing in winter, and riding Soviet bicycles in summer. Volleyball and basketball games can also be organized in the gym. The
combination of the Soviet culture of the town and the surrounding nature brings its own charms for tourists, because the acquaintance with the town becomes vivid and complex.

It is very important to remember that the Norwegian laws apply on the territory of Svalbard. Not only the inhabitants of the island, but also animals and nature in general are under the protection of the Norwegian law. Svalbard has many different traditions, as it is the territory where people of more than 40 nationalities who love the Arctic live. Many traditions are rooted in the history of Arctic exploration, many were born in the process of practical life situations. Therefore, you should follow the guide's tips and commonsense.

The 4-day / 3-night tour program starts with the arrival at Longyearbyen airport. Longyearbyen (aka Longyearbyen) is the administrative center of the archipelago and the capital of Svalbard province (Norwegian for Svalbard). It has the northernmost locality. After lunch at the “Fruene AS” cafe you will go to the Center of Arctic tourism “Grumant”, where you will receive instructions on safety and snowmobiling, get the proper equipment, pack your things for transportation and depart o the town of Pyramid on snowmobiles.

The second day will be dedicated to the following: the site of the former mine – the farm – the growers – the machine shop – the sports complex – the local school – trolley with the latest coal mining – a sign marking the latitude of the town – the former dorms – the dining room – the monument to Lenin – the Cultural center. In your free time, you can make a walk on “Soviet skis”, and in the evening they will invite you to participate in a musical program with songs from films popular in the Soviet Union in the 1960-80s.

The third day– Snowmobiling on the route Pyramid-glacier Nordenskiold - glacier Thun-Tempelfjord-Sassendalen-Pyramid to explore the natural attractions of the island.

The fourth day - departure to Longyearbyen on snowmobiles and a transfer to the airport. The main service provider for this tour can be the center for Arctic tourism "Grumant". The proposed project concerns the use of socio-cultural and industrial facilities that have been preserved in the town of Pyramid.

In order to ensure safety and prevent emergencies, as well as in compliance with the law on Svalbard [10], the center for Arctic Tourism “Grumant” of the “Arkticugol” has:
- approval of the Svalbard Governor for all routes;
- mandatory financial guarantee for 50,000 NOK, in case of rescue operations;
- emergency satellite beacons registered with the Norwegian national communications authority.

Experienced instructors will help you complete the route with maximum comfort and safety.

The tourist offer discussed in the article can be used as an independent tourist product, or as an additional service to existing routes. The main thing is that the implementation of such a trip to Svalbard will increase the interest in this tourist object among both compatriots and foreign tourists.

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