



## Consulting Services to Develop Tourism in Tajikistan

### Client Issue

Working with the longest standing tourism development agency in Tajikistan, etc4CA were initially asked to address some of the concerns of the owner of this organisation. Specifically, the client recognised that the volume of tourist traffic through his region was insufficient to sustainably develop an industry around tourism. Three issues were identified:

- Development agencies have focused upon investment into the tourism sector but once their 'support' is withdrawn, the recipients are simply left with tour operations as their sole means of commercial survival. Their focus then switches to tour operations and, as a consequence, tourism development falls away.
- There has been limited investment in the marketing of Tajikistan, as a tourism destination, into the 'first world' client community. Furthermore, there is no clear branding of the 'offers' to tourists and targeted marketing is therefore difficult.
- Growth of the tourism sector has been slow and service providers (home-stay owners, drivers, guides) are struggling to make an adequate living from the sporadic and limited demand for their services. Consequently, service providers are reluctant to invest in those services in light of an unlikely return on any investment.

The short-term challenges are:

1. How to establish a model for sustainable tourism development;
2. Identification of a brand and targeted marketing at the most appropriate tourism sector; and
3. To kick-start some development initiatives that could immediately improve the tourist experience.

### etc4CA Approach

etc4CA considers this client engagement as a long-term project. We have taken the following steps to date:

- The Tajikistan tourism sector was researched during the first 6 months of 2011
- Employees from four 'tourism development' agencies were interviewed
- The Tajikistan tourism 'offer' was evaluated and further interviews were conducted to evaluate the attractions for the 'first world' tourist.
- Experience of tour operators in the Kyrgyzstan tourism industry was investigated
- etc4CA attended 2<sup>nd</sup> National Tourism Conference, Tajikistan, held in Dushanbe on 27/09/11.

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## Value Delivered

Working with our client, we have developed a strategy and designed a business model that enabled:

- A de-merger to occur, segregating the tourism development activities and the tour operations activities. This enabled the original brand of the business to return to eco-tourism.
- The launch of a new tour operations business and brand with:
  - Strong web and social media presence (Website, Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter)
  - First-world styling and rich content for the browsing community of prospective tourists. The blend of rich content and attractive photography has made this site the most visited Tajik tour operator website, success being measured by high standing in Google search listings.
  - Market differentiation with a clear indication of intent in 'ecotourism' activity
  - To date (four months since launch) the website has received 760 unique visitors from 72 countries. Page read is, on average, over 2 minutes per page.
- Targeting of the 'Pamir Highway' brand at discerning, adventurous and affluent 'first world' clients.
- Production of a 2012 Pamir Highway calendar in order to:
  - Generate revenue for the development activities to be performed;
  - Provide a medium for advertising Tajikistan to first world clients; and
  - Demonstrate that tourism development can be a profitable activity.
- A business model for sustainable tourism development to be formulated (without any reliance on tour operations)
- Profits from calendar sales to be directed into the replacement of equipment and facilities for tourists.

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