

P6. Annual international soil-ecological excursion in Siberia

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Abstract

Beginning in 1995, annual field trips through Siberia have been organized for students, researchers, and lecturers from different universities throughout Western Europe. The primary goal of the field trip is the interdisciplinary exchange of experience and knowledge, and surmounting the language barrier by demonstrating the interrelationships of various undisturbed (by human activity) ecosystem components. The focus of the excursion is on soil formation processes resulting from the interaction of climate, vegetation and geological substratum. Characteristics of soil formation and ecosystem succession under continental climatic conditions, as well as the impressive wealth of unaltered or virtually untouched landscapes of great beauty, are compared with those of agricultural and forest plantations.

Currently, two different routes of the excursion are well developed. One of them covers all latitude bioclimatic zones from the taiga to the southern forest steppe, including steppe ecosystems on the West Siberian Plain and all elevation belts from the tundra to the steppe and the Central Asian semi-desert zone in the Altai Mountains region (near the Mongolian border). Another route goes through all West Siberian Plain from dry steppe (near the Kazakhstan's border) to tundra behind the Polar Circle.

This successful experience in conducting excursions and summer schools in Siberia allows us to suggest new ways of environmental education together with foreign professors from different countries working in areas of basic and applied natural sciences (e.g. ecology, soil science, botany, geology, geomorphology, physical geography, landscape architecture and planning, forestry, and agriculture). The professors will get possibility to organize their teaching events (such as excursions, expeditions, summer schools etc.) for their students in Siberia with our comprehensive help getting access to untouched Siberian landscapes of great beauty with high level of biodiversity; guidance of field courses, seminars and lectures by leading Russian scientist; full-day service delivered by experienced Russian service team (including kitchen staff) even in field conditions; getting contacts with leading scientists in Siberian research institutions; reliable service in organization and management.

Taking into account specific scientific and/or educational interests and tasks of a professor/scientist, the Siberian specialists will beforehand develop a proper plan of a teaching event including route chart of a field excursion or will adapt our already existing well-developed excursion routes and programs to a special task. It is worth to underscore that the team of Siberian specialists are able to help a professor to organize and manage both excursions with an emphasis (1) on natural untouched ecosystems and (2) specialized

courses on the most important environmental themes such as sustainable land use, nature protection and conservation, soil contamination, global warming etc.
More information is available at our website: www.siberia-eco.org.