



Discovering Azerbaijan

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Inspirational Gusar





Azerbaijan's Gusar district has been very popular with foreign tourists since the opening of the Shahdag ski resort complex. Its incredibly beautiful mountain scenery, clean air, a wide range of recreation and entertainment options every year only increase the flow of those wishing to see these lands. The town of Gusar itself is located 180 kilometers north of Baku, not far from the border with the Russian Federation. Some people mistakenly think that this name is connected with the fact that hussars and other soldiers of the Caucasian corps of the Imperial Russian army used to live here. There are several theories of the origin of this word. Most of them are based on the Lezghin etymology, because representatives of this Caucasian people are compactly settled in the region. Be that as it may, Gusar is first of all associated with the mesmerizing beauty of this mountainous region. It is here that the highest point of Azerbaijan, Mount Bazarduzu (4,466 meters) is located. Mountaineers, ice climbers and extreme sports enthusiasts in general adore the neighborhood of Gusar. But this region is also appreciated by those fond of organic products. In the forests, which occupy one fifth of the region, there are countless berries - hawthorn, rose hips, sea buckthorn, sumac, dogwood, just to name a few. In Gusar, people produce original drinks from local fruits, which are highly appreciated on domestic and foreign markets. In the fall, a season of mushrooms begins - there are white mushrooms, rus-sules, yellow boletus and milk mushrooms here. You can pick mushrooms and berries, or just enjoy the coolness of the forest on the "health trail" near the Gusar Olympic Complex. After the signs with philosophical sayings



were posted along the trail, this path became known as the "path of wisdom".

The town of Gusar itself is associated with the names of at least two famous personalities - the outstanding Russian poet Mikhail Lermontov and orthopedic surgeon Gavriil Ilizarov. Lermontov arrived in Gusar in 1836 and stayed over at his acquaintance, military doctor Lieutenant Colonel Aleksandr Marshev. The poet was in exile, but Azerbaijan and its people became a source of inspiration for him. Azerbaijani thinker, poet and playwright Mirza Fatali Akhundov helped him to understand the culture and traditions of these places. The period spent in Azerbaijan was reflected in many poems by Lermontov. His most famous work with Azerbaijani flavor was the fairy tale "Ashig Gerib", written under the impression of meeting a famous ashig, Lezgi Ahmed. There is





a memorial stele with a bas-relief in front of the house where Lermontov lived.

Another memorial house is associated with the name of Gavriil Ilizarov, the world-famous surgeon and inventor of the fracture treatment apparatus. He was seven years old when his father, Mordekhay Ilizarov, moved his family here to escape the Holocaust. The decision to become a doctor came to Gavriil at the age of nine, when he was badly poisoned by pears sprayed with copper sulfate. During the Great Patriotic War, young Ilizarov had to master several medical specialties at once, but his main dream was to find a way to put maimed front-line soldiers back on their feet. It was then that he invented the device that made him famous all over the world.

The village of Anikh, located on a hilltop 27 kilometers southwest of Gusar, is famous for two attractions at once. People settled here a long time ago, choosing a convenient place for defense, as they had to protect themselves from the constant raids of invaders, including the Arabs. There is a theory that a well fortified fortress was built here already in the 9th century. The remains of the fortress wall, which are attributed to the 13th century, have reached our days. The wall stands on

a base of stones and pebbles, it is six to nine meters in height, and its width is about two meters. On one side of the wall there is someone's vegetable garden and on the other a school library with carefully planted plants around the perimeter. Nearby is a monument to the heroes of the Great Patriotic War. What a symbiosis of epochs and generations!

The main attraction of Anikh is the mosque, which is often referred to as a "flowery mosque" and even compared to the Taj Mahal. Judging by the plaque above the mihrab, it was built in 1911 at the expense of Sheikh Abumuslum. The villagers claim that a mosque was erected on this place three hundred years earlier. According to the legend, the residents of Anikh, making pilgrimage to Mecca, saw the architectural sights of different countries and decided to build an equally beautiful mosque in their native village. For the interior decoration, they attracted four artists who, using natural dyes from plant roots, created a completely unique interior. On the walls, besides flowers and fruits, one can see various landscapes probably seen by pilgrims in other countries. Now the mosque is being prepared for restoration. It will be another reason to visit Gusar district, which has so much more to offer! ♦







