

North Caucasus Resorts Dazzle the Elite at Sochi

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Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev sliding along one of the gentler ski slopes in the North Caucasus.

Andrei Makhonin

Tourism developments in the North Caucasus region got a boost of high-level support at the Sochi Investment Forum, which took place from Thursday to Sunday.

The initiative to turn the North Caucasus into a major tourist destination continues to expand, with new projects being announced and existing projects entering the construction phase.

Representatives of the North Caucasus Resorts, the state-controlled developer of a tourism cluster in the region, and officials from the republic of Kabardino-Balkaria signed an agreement at the forum to develop a resort on Russia's highest mountain, Elbrus.

"We can only say at this first stage that we're talking about [setting up] cable cars and ski slopes," said Alla Isayeva, spokeswoman for Northern Caucasus Resorts.

Isayeva added that the project will include the development of new hotel infrastructure on the property and the redesign of existing facilities.

Northern Caucasus Resorts already has another project in the area, Elbrus-Bezengi. The project envisions a ski resort with 165 kilometers of ski routes and a daily capacity of up to 29,000 people. The company plans to start construction on the site in 2014 and have the resort operating at full capacity by late 2019.

High-level officials, including Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, who toured the Northern Caucasus Resorts stand at the forum voiced their support for such work.

“I will surely continue to promote this project, and not just because this region is important for Russia,” Medvedev said at the forum. “Perhaps it is for a simple reason. If we can [build resorts] here, we can do this anywhere, and this is very important for us.”

Other North Caucasus republics also tried to impress the forum guests.

North Ossetia presented its Mamison mountain resort. The facility, which will have 196 kilometers of ski routes and a daily capacity of 30,000 people, is expected to welcome its first visitors in 2014.

Meanwhile, Chechnya is seeking to attract athletes to its tourist complex near Kezenoi-am Lake. The area was a training base for Olympic kayakers in the Soviet period, and the current officials hope to restore the athletic traditions by building a modern facility on the site.

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