



Irkutsk Region (Russian: "Иркутская область", Irkutskaya oblast) is regional administrative unit within Siberian Federal District of Russia, located in south-eastern Siberia in the basins of Angara River, Lena, and Nizhnyaya Tunguska Rivers. The administrative center is the city of Irkutsk.

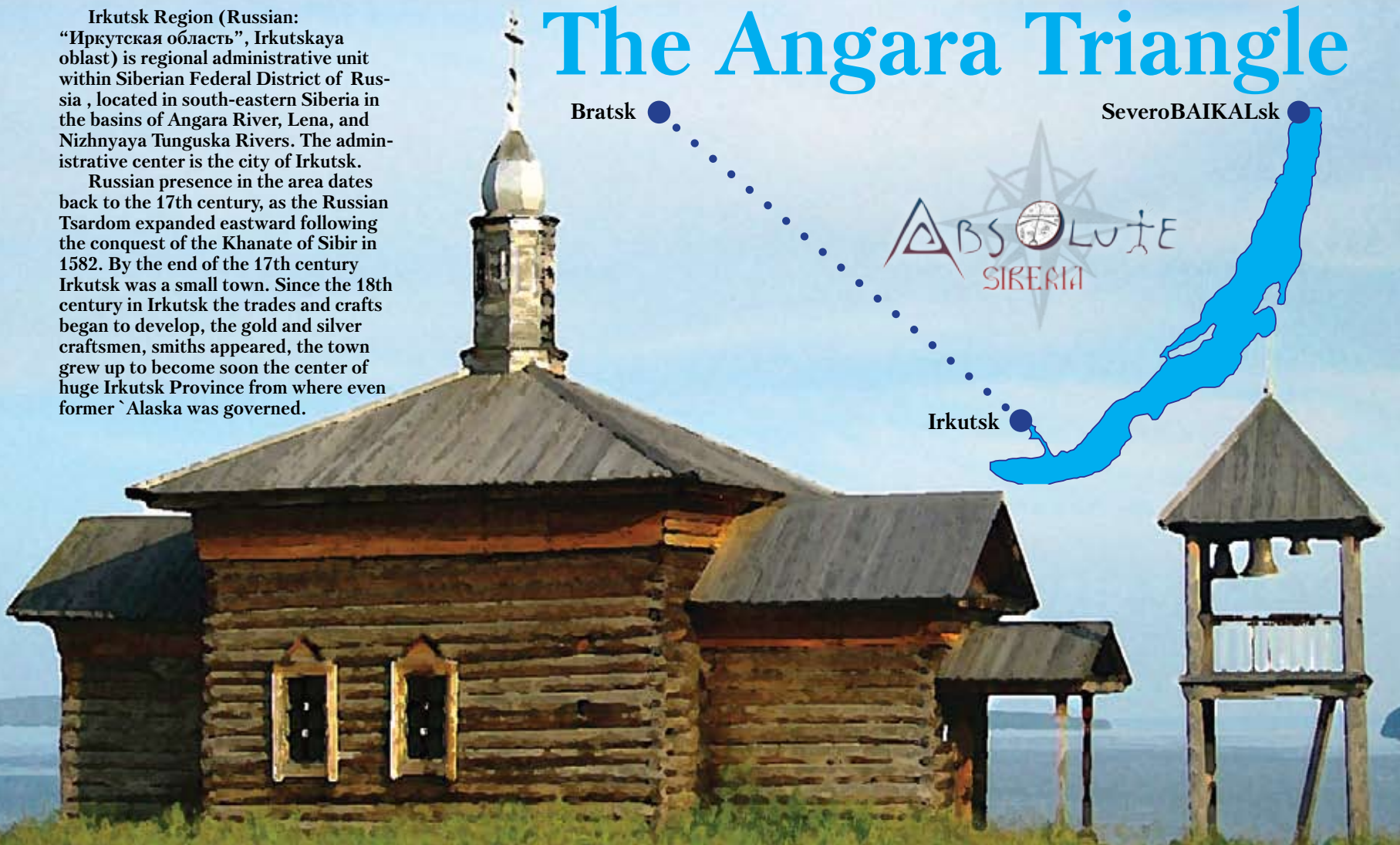
Russian presence in the area dates back to the 17th century, as the Russian Tsardom expanded eastward following the conquest of the Khanate of Sibir in 1582. By the end of the 17th century Irkutsk was a small town. Since the 18th century in Irkutsk the trades and crafts began to develop, the gold and silver craftsmen, smiths appeared, the town grew up to become soon the center of huge Irkutsk Province from where even former `Alaska was governed.

## The Angara Triangle

Bratsk

SeveroBAIKALsk

Irkutsk





# The Angara Triangle



If you live in the United States or in India, then the word “Angara” can bring instant images either of Senator Ed Angara calling for the shift to renewable energy and supporting green jobs, or the Tandoori chicken cooked over red hot coal called “angara” in classic Indian restaurant. One may also remember an important character in the “Mahabharata-Krishna” who appeared from the “angara” burning charcoals or the emerald engagement rings sold at the famous Los Angeles-based “Angara” jewelry store. To a geographer or anyone who happened to extensively travel through Northern Asia, or well read Michael Strogoff by Jules Verne, the word “Angara” will certainly remind of the beautiful Siberian river, the only one floating out from the world’s deepest, oldest and largest in volume of water –Lake Baikal.

Angara is a word in ancient Sanskrit that means “the fire within”. “Angara” is also used as one of the 108 names of the sun. And it is with this Angara that the Earth has created magnificent gemstones. Chosen because it evokes the feeling of far off, beautiful places, and because its root language, Sanskrit, being the oldest known language in the world, the “Angara” is a perfect companion to one of oldest feelings in the world: love...

With no doubt the Angara river is a gem of Eastern Siberia which value is hard to overestimate. It is the river of true love appreciated by the native Siberian, and this Angara Gem is not just a physical stretch of river banks or a huge surrounding terrain. It is an ancient ethno-genetic landscape of living of the native people and settled Russians of Siberia. It’s a gem so far remaining mostly undiscovered both by Russian and foreign travelers, though offering a rich array of natural, historical and humane wonder.

During Soviet times, the power of the Angara was harnessed utilizing three enormous hydro-electric dams. 63% of Angara’s potential resources were captured to fuel the energy needs of a nation struggling to remain the world’s manufacturing leader. The construction of dams on the Angara resulted in appearance of large man-made seas and flooded tremendous area. The Angara River Grid of Dams gave rise to fast development of industry in Irkutsk Region. But, there was also a negative impact of the reservoir construction on the life of the villages downstream, many of which had to be relocated from the flooded areas, or lost some of the best lands of their collective farms.

Over 100 old peasants’ villages complete with their best farm lands and about 70 islands that had been in long economic use by the locals were flooded by the water. Few



*The Angara Triangle-  
the area of Love  
of the Twin Angara  
Rivers of Holy Baikal  
and Its people, a new  
and deeper look into  
Siberia's past, and  
present...*

local people living in the areas along the Bratsk reservoir ( a number of villages with no roads to access to), still manage to preserve some of their old ways of life and culture, real spiritual character of the Russian backcountry nation that in spite of the current economic problems helps some to live a decent life.

The Angara Triangle, described below, is a special product developed by “Absolute Siberia” Events & Expeditions Bureau and funded by the Irkutsk Regional Government Agency for Tourism. The aim of the tour product, so far unmatched in Siberia, is to help the economies of local communities through sustainable tourism, on one hand, and give a well-deserved chance to Russian and foreign travelers experience the great “gem” Angara and its people living in the backcountry, explore unique archeological sites, watch the ancient rituals practiced by the Bokhan Buryats and see the Evenk reindeer people en route the “Angara Triangle”. The program below features both of the Angara rivers - the lower Angara ( Baikal’s only outlet in its south) and the Upper Angara that flows into the lake in its northernmost point. Landscapes of both of the Angaras – equal gems of Lake Baikal - are gorgeous, people who live here are famed for their warm hospitality, openness and willingness to share their cultures and life experience with guests. Great pictures will surely not be missed.

We welcome you to the world’s largest watershed area of the Angara Triangle. Besides exploring the Paris of Siberia – Irkutsk and Well of the Planet Erath – Lake Baikal, the below suggested tour highlights also hikes to one of the mother earth power spots, boat ride on the Russia’s nicknamed “Dragon Lake” also unique for its bird-watching resources, archeological treasure of Malta settlement (Siberia’s richest & oldest site of prehistoric, preserved intact art) , stopovers in unique Siberian villages where famous Russian author Valentin Rasputin was born, the Decembrists’ revolutionaries and Bolsheviks alike including Joseph Stalin stayed in exile; the culture and folklore of the native Buryat and local Russian communities living in the backcountry of Siberia; the “brother” city of Bratsk with its great culinary arts and Bratsk Hydro Power Station ; living legacy of the Siberian native and Russian history & culture - original museum of ethnography & wooden houses in the open air –“The Angara Village”, explore the taiga-wilderness of the northern areas of Irkutsk region on based in Bratsk “Siberian Safari” trips, take a train ride on BAM Railway to the north of Baikal to meet the Evenk people community , visit the oldest Russian settlement in the north of Baikal before cruising the entire length of Lake Baikal from north to south in one day by hydrofoil...



House of Europe, former mansion of Irkutsk merchant Shubin

Day 1

## MOST WELCOME TO IRKUTSK

- “Paris of Siberia”, capital of its great Eastern part, Microcosm of Siberia and the gateway to Its Pearl - Lake Baikal!

◆ *“For the benefit of those travelers whose time and means are limited, I am convinced that there is no better way of getting an impression of Siberia, both old and new, than to*

*go to Irkutsk and, using it as a base, take few easy side trips. Only there can the “Siberian Miracle” be seen in condensed form – not all of it, no, but enough to get a fairly good picture. To me Irkutsk is Siberia, as it was, and as it is...”*  
**(George St. George)**

Upon arrival we meet you at the airport and transfer by coach to your hotel for a check in. After lunch we start out by coach for a sightseeing tour of Irkutsk, perhaps, Siberia’s most attractive city.

It was founded in the latter half of the 17th century as a Cossack garrison, and became a wealthy trading centre because of its position on the crossroads of overland trade routes like Great Tea Road between European Russia and China. The discovery of gold nearby in the 1880s turned Irkutsk into a booming city. Despite a fire in 1879 that destroyed more than half the city, the older districts still have lovely wood-framed houses and log izbas. The great wealth amassed by the local merchants contributed greatly to the unique character of Irkutsk architecture, because when it came time for them to build their homes, they called on the best architects in Russia. And it sometimes happened that a talented architect left the first memories of himself in far Siberia and only later gained fame in Moscow and St.Petersburg.



Above: Local Lore Museum  
Right: White House - former residence of Irkutsk Province Governor, at present - University Library



In 2011 Irkutsk celebrated 350-year anniversary since its foundation. To commemorate this, the so-called historical section Number 130 is being fully reconstructed to gain back more of the city's historical environment.

Today we will visit and see the city's most atmospheric sights like the first church and stone building from which the city originated - graceful Savior Church called "The swan song of ancient Russian architecture" by specialists, then stop at Znamenskaya Orthodox Cathedral famed for beautiful iconostasis, the graves of so-called Russian Columbus and those of the Decembrists revolutionaries banned to Siberia after ill-fated uprising to overthrow the Russian Tzar; proceed to the Angara river bankment to take photos of the local "White House" and bronze statue of Alexander the 3-rd, fancy wooden houses uniquely decorated with ginger-bread, and more...

◆ *"The town, half Byzantine, half Chinese, becomes European as soon as he sees its macadamized roads, bordered with pavements, traversed by canals, planted with gigantic birches, its houses of brick and wood, some of which have several stories, the numerous equipages which drive along, not only tarantasses but broughams and coaches; lastly, its numerous inhabitants far advanced in civilization, to whom the latest Paris fashions are not unknown" - by Jules Verne*





Listvyanka settlement on Lake Baikal  
The mouth of the Angara river



## Day 2

# Lake Baikal: The Pearl of Siberia & Well Of The Planet Earth

❖ *“Baikal is not just a lake, but something greater and deeper. It is bottomless and majestic, but not an ocean or sea in which man loses all his visible bearings. There we sense the greatness of nature, feeling at one with it, not alienated from it, which is a rare phenomenon in developed countries. Baikal is a bridge to space. You must see Baikal to be able to say what it is like.” (Erdeni Ulanov, 1993)*

After breakfast we check out from the hotel for a full-day trip to Lake Baikal located 62 km away from Irkutsk up the Angara river stream. When we approach the only outlet of Baikal – the source of the Angara river – we stop near the Shaman rock associated with many popular legends which your informative guide will tell you about. Here one can take pictures of gorgeous landscapes of the Southern part of Baikal with huge water space ahead and snow-topped mountains of Khamar Daban Mountain Range on the opposite side of Lake Baikal. You will certainly notice how fast here the river current is, due to very steep gradient of the river bed that makes the Angara one the world’s mightiest rivers.

After check in at cozy and comfortable hotel overlooking the lake we will have a tasty lunch of typical local cuisine to be served at the “Proshly Vek” (meaning “Past Century”) waterfront restaurant. Then we tour Baikal Ecology Museum which has a large display of unique exhibits of the lake’s flora and fauna, see an interesting video about Lake Baikal and the museum’s aquarium to get introduced to the lake’s unique aqua-fauna including the Baikal “nerpa” – the fresh water seals that still remain a mystery of Lake Baikal to be unraveled: how the seals from their native Arctic ocean managed to penetrate the lake located amidst Asiatic continent?

After touring the Baikal Ecology Museum we will still have time before dinner to visit functioning one-of-a-kind St. Nicolas-the Miracle-Worker Orthodox Church built of wood, the bazaar that boasts on various kinds of local hand made souvenirs and where one can see how the fresh Baikal endemic omul-fish is smoked.



## Day 3

# On short cruise by boat to explore unique Baikal

“... Our people live at the shores of the sacred Lake Baikal, their roots are deep and the history of the past is rich, the beautiful nature and crystal-clear waters of Baikal inspire them and give hopes for the better future. We are open for friendly relationships and with dignity we feel our selves as being an integral part of humanity wishing to live in peace and harmony with all peoples of the Earth.”- **an unknown Buryat author**

After a short transfer to the pier we board our private all-weather boat vessel for further transfer to the village of Bolshoye Goloustnoye (B.Goloustnaya). The boat ride northwards along the lake’s western shore on board of comfortable boat will take us about 3 hours and a half. Throughout the ride we will pass by a village of Bolhiye Koty – the former gold mining area in the early 19-th century, and now – the village of fishermen and hunters, research workers of the Biology Station of Irkutsk State University; then en route we pass by the Kadilnaya Bay strict nature preserve in the premises of Pribaikalsky National Park, and following further along the shore we finally approach the B.Goloustnaya village.

Upon arrival in the village of B.Goloustnaya we will be transferred to your Siberian families for a 2-nights stay.

After having been introduced to your host families of Zoya or Irina, we will have a home made lunch of tasty Siberian cuisine. Then we proceed on easy walk to the delta of Goloustnyaya river. The name of the river itself means “bare delta” which is the only place on the western shore of Baikal where waterfowl nest and dwell. In swampy areas and tiny shallow lakes of the delta there nest Mallards, Baikal teals, goosanders, tufted ducks as well as ruddy shelducks, Asiatic do-witcher, white-tailed and imperial eagle, corncrake and others – over 100 nesting pairs of breeding birds and thousands of migrating ducks are encountered here every year. Ornithologists from Irkutsk insist on including this area into system of Russia’s ornithological special wildlife sanctuaries territories and developing of special conditions of protection within the Baikal area national park.







During our walk through the village we'll also visit the legendary church of St. Nicolas the Miracle- Worker. Since many of the village people depended on fishing in the sea the most worshipped Orthodox Saint was St. Nicolas-The-Miracle-Worker. A legend says that a famous wonder Icon Sculpture of St. Nicolas miraculously appeared here at the ancient place of shamanist believers. Where it had appeared the monks placed the Cross in the 17-th century, and then in 1701-1703 the first Orthodox Chapel was built here on request of the Cossacks. Finally, the first Orthodox church was built in the village on February, 05, 1867, in honor of St. Nicolas of the Greek city of Mira. It worth noting that in the construction of the church took part Russian, Buryat and Evenk people.

Inside the church we'll see the original icons saved during anti-religion purges by local old ladies and the original wooden carved and painted cypress icon-sculpture of St. Nicolas-the Miracle-Worker.

On return back to your host families and before dinner enjoy Russian banya– (steam bath), which is a national specialty of the Russians, a treatment for just about any sickness, a place to clean, a place to think, and a place to relax. Outside urban Russia, Banya is used as the most common form of washing, especially during the cold winter months. Inside, a fire heats up stones and water, the temperature can be rising as much as 115 degrees Celsius (of course, for you to feel yourself comfortable your hosts will keep the temperature somehow lower). And certainly, a supply of birch besoms will be provided, because no Russian Banya is complete without the beating with fresh birch branches...- true Siberian natural massage experience!

After the above enjoyment we will have dinner, and if you're not tired – learn a very popular Russian song “Glorious Sea-Holy Lake Baikal”.

#### **Information about Bolshoye Goloustnoye village:**

Bolshoye Goloustnoye is an old Baikal community of c. 600 residents on the southwestern shoreline of Lake Baikal rich with history dating back to early trade and mail routes that crossed the frozen lake. Creation in 1985 of the Pribaikalsky National Park, completely encompassing the small village, effectively eliminated timber and log processing, the economic mainstay of the community.



The village was founded in 1673 by a Buryat person named Soriel who moved with his family to the delta of the river. He chose this place for the residence since, as he said, “there meat could be bagged without knife, fish caught without tackles and wood without

axe”. In 1740 a Russian exile named Pavel Strekalovsky arrived in here and bought the log-cabin from the monks. Assisted by the Buryat people he built up the boats to develop commercial fishing and carry goods cargo across the lake. In winter he would still be engaged in merchandise transportation across the lake on the ice with horse-drawn sleighs. He managed to maintain very friendly relations with local Buryat people, taught them how to grow potatoes and wheat.

The village was conveniently located on cross roads of local trade routes, and was a popular destination. Russian Ambassador to China in the 18-th century used to pass by this village, as well as it was visited by Protopop Avaakuum and the founder of anarchism – Prince Peter Kropotkin, as well as by other prominent Russian figures. The village is also the place of one of the oldest meteorological stations on lake Baikal which has been operating since 1897. You will have an opportunity to visit it – your host Zoya is on the station's staff.



## Day 4 – En route the Earth's Power Spot

We follow the countryside road that offers great views of Baikal with Khamar-Daman snow-topped mountains on the opposite side to be seen. After reaching picturesque Semenovka hollow we turn right and walk another 1 km to the site of officially recognized nature landmark of Irkutsk region – the Dry Lake. One of its remarkable features is that the lake's bowl is filled with water only once in few years and where the water comes from to fill out the bowl, where then it leaves to – nobody knows.

Here at the Dry Lake Rock one can feel the energy of the Earth, and tune into the complex Earth grid that has been known and related to by people around the world from times immemorial. Perhaps, after squeezing up against the Dry Lake Petrophyte Crags thought to be a link to the Earth Grid we will notice a subtle yet obvious shift in our own energy. Or at least, you can try your feelers sense the energy in the Dry Lake's environment around. The energy close to the Earth grid here is rich in ions that can boost one's energy

◆ Today we hike to the mysteriously famous Sukhoye Ozero (meaning “Dry Lake”) or as the Buryts call this mysterious lake – Hara Gorhyeon ( “The Black Spring”)– a very special place, that is believed to be one of the Earth's power spots.

The Dry Lake is located about 5 km away from our village home stays in a small bowl-valley of the Pribaikalsky national park premises. The walk along the shore is an easy one totalling 10 km in distance.





British tourists on a hike near Goloustnoye village  
 Zoya Mishina and her family - your friendly hosts  
 from B.Goloustnayax  
 Smoking tasty and endemic Baikla omul-fish



and make feel recharged... ..

Even looking around one can easily notice that the small Dry Lake bowl within a very small area of 500 square meters is surrounded by nearly all specie of trees and plants that are known in Lake Baikal area. Anyway, after some trying to tune into our Mother Earth over here, or just relaxing a bit in a peaceful natural environment, we will start our way back.

We will have our lunch as picnic in the picturesque setting of taiga- woods. By the time we approach the picnic place the family of Zoya Grishina– her son Vladimir, daughter-in-law Anna and grandson Vlad will be about to finish smoking endemic and tasty omul-fish fresh caught by Vladimir just 3-4 hours ago. After nice home made meal in the open-air we will continue our walk to the place of our village stay.

On the way back we can call on Zoya – our hostess at the place of her work- small meteorological station, the oldest on Lake Baikal.

On return to the home stay we will have some time to prepare for the next banya with birch besoms and nice steam provided.

We'll washed and banya-steamed, we then will go to visit local Buryat family of the Pastukhovs whose far ancestors were the first in the mid 17-th century to come to the delta of Goloustnaya and settle it down together with the Russian Cossacks.

We'll be met by the Buryat hostesses at the front gate of their household and after brief introduction to each other they'll show us to the dining room to have dinner of Buryat national cuisine. The home made dinner of natural and ecologically pure products today will feature some Buryat specialties like "salamat" – fried flour with sauer cream, home made noodle and "bukhler" – soup with mutton, "pozy" –big meat dumplings cooked on steam, mutton ribs, and some more tasty entrees. Besides, the Buryat hosts will offer us to try their "tarasun" - milk moonshine.



Nature landmark -Dry Lake that sometime can be wet...

Zoya's and Irina's woden houses -your home away from home...

After dinner we will enjoy the folklore performance by the Buryat ladies accompanied by local shaman. The amateur folk ensemble will perform several Buryat folk songs about life of the Buryats, their love for natural world and respect for the ancestral spirits and local deities, about Glorious Sea- Holy Baikal. We will have a nice opportunity to learn about the culture and ways of life of the western Buryats. Finally, the Buryats will invite you to dance with them their national “youhor” circle dance. After a briefing and short training exercise you’ll definitely like dancing the “youhor” together with these charming Buryat people. This will be a great entertainment, trust us !

Well entertained and with new interesting knowledge and experience we’ll return back to our village home stays for overnight.

*The area around the village of Goloustnaya is very unique. Close to the village wildlife boasts on fantastic array of rare and endemic specie of plant and animal life. Perhaps, that’s why the Evenki and Buryat people in the long past would never live right on Baikal shore ,coming to the lake only for temporarily stay in need to fish or hunt Baikal fresh water seal. The Evenki shamans used to teach once that each person needed to find their own “power spot”. The Dry lake was considered to be one of such energetic places that draw people making them feel more alive and alert. People would come here regularly incorporating this practice into their routine life, and even heal some of their diseases. The Goloustnaya valley and its vicinity represent high botanical value that’s hard to overestimate in conditions of the northern hemisphere. Highly varied canopy of the river valley provides unique features for plant specie making them somehow different from average ones, though relating to same family or named same. There’re 46 rare plant species, 12 of which are strictly protected. That’s probably why the Goloustnaya River basin was selected as a Baikal model area in the Russian Federation GEF Biodiversity Conservation Project.*



*Miraculous appearance on the shore of the cypress icon-sculpture of St. Nicolas-the Miracle-Worker not made by human hand , its further evanition and final return to the village; the Dry Lake Earth Energy spot; unique groves of fragrant poplars and very unusual shapes of double-trunk larch trees in the area, most ancient age of cedar trees; Siberian rhododendron and wild brere (Rosa canina) often reported to bloom here both in spring and autumn(!); unique colors and shapes of lacinated violet and blood iris, tremendous jungles of Bergenia; edelweiss growing on the shore of Baikal, homes of rare pale polecat and long-tailed Siberian souslik; extraordinary appearance in 1964 in the delta of the Goloustnaya of Dalmatian pelican (!);location of many caves in the vicinity of the village including the largest and still unexplored “Ancient Hunter” Cave with various and fantastic stalagmite and stalactite formations; the mummy of Baikal Princess found 10 km away ... And,certainly, real warm Siberian hospitality of local people make this place A Very Special One...*

The Dry Lake Limestone Crag where mother Earth expells its energy...





## Day 5

# Back to Irkutsk via mainland,

passing by the native land of the Baikal Princess wooden yurts and holy oboo-site of Buryats

After breakfast we will have time to pack up the luggage, and then bid our farewell to our hosts and their families, before departing to Irkutsk by coach. A distance of about 125 km we will drive 3,5 hours with 2 stops en route.

First, we stop near the Shantuisky Bridge, where according to a legend famous shaman named Shantuyev was buried, and where in 2002 near the sacred mountain of Burkhey they found a well-preserved mummy of the Buryat baby called later as the Baikal princess by the shamanist believers and archeologists.

◆ The Baikal Princess then vanished from the original cave to reappear only in 2009 in the Taltsy museum where ethnographers, archeologists wanted to carry on special studies of the mummy. That became at the center of scandal in Siberia. Buryat people were unhappy that the sacred symbol has been moved to a museum fearing curse of the Baikal Princess mummy over tomb robbery, and Siberian shamans predicted disasters if the iconic mummy would not be kept in peace. The mummy was returned (video about the Baikal Princess here <http://www.somvid.com/video/JXyVvlh2RCU/Locals-fear-curse-of-Baikal-mummy-over-tomb-robbery.html>)

But as for us we stop here at the Shantuisky Bridge to see original Buryat dwellings - wooden yurts – their homes for many centuries before the Russians penetrated this part of Siberia.

Having mastered the skill of wooden architecture Buryats in the past continued to adhere to the former yurt's design, but they experimented building eight-, six- and even-



tually four-sided yurts. In the centre there was a square earthen site for the hearth, and the entrance door faced, as usual, to the South. Roofs of wooden yurts were covered with a layer of turf (sod) and windows were covered with the cleansed bladders of domestic animals. Yurts were usually made from wood of the larch-tree for it is firm and durable; at the very least it constituted the lower rings of the yurt. Different household structures, sheds and troughs for watering cattle were made from larch. Over the yurt's door there hung a horse shoe to bring good fortune to the family.

The Buryat people were all Shamanist believers and believed that if a person cuts a tree for no reason the person's life or that of the descendants would be shortened. A man's appearance was compared to the tree trunk with its head, absorbing sunny rays and warmth. The ancestors of Buryats were absolutely convinced that trees felled during a storm would cause the quick death of people. Cedar, fir, pine and larch were held sacred; near them rituals were carried out and to them sacrifices

and gifts were brought. During childbirth a woman held the wooden support post of the yurt. When the child was born, a notch was made on the post. When the deceased master of the yurt was taken to the place of his burial, the post was carried with him. Thus the yurt was the centre of life and of the Universe; it symbolized the connection between generations.

After taking pictures of the wooden yurts we will continue by coach further to make our next stop in about 20 km at the holy site of the Buryats – so-called “oboo” with totem poles and many ribbons tied on the bushes to honor the ancestral spirits and local deities of nature. Here following the Buryat ancient custom we will be invited to do an offering to the local gods and spirits by sprinkling some milk and a bit of vodka...

Upon arrival in Irkutsk and checking in at the down town hotel enjoy lunch, and the rest of the day is free for you to explore the city of Irkutsk on your own. Our local guide though will be there to help you with the Irkutsk whereabouts...



## Day 6

# Cruise along the world's largest manmade sea, above the Angara Atlantida and homeland of Valentin Rasputin



After transfer to the city's boat station docks we board the Soviet-made 105-seater "Meteor" hydrofoil for a 660 km ride to the city of Bratsk located in the lower reaches of the Angara. Our 12-hour trip will actually proceed along the original Angara River and then Bratsk man made reservoir of the Angara – the world's largest manmade river reservoir . The Bratsk reservoir is often called the Dragon Lake - the tributary Oka and Iya rivers, which rise in the northern sector of Eastern Sayan mountains, form the "jaws" of the dragon, while 400 km of the Angara River forms the tail. In

about one hour from board of the hydrofoil and on the left bank of the Angara one can see the Malta village surroundings famed for the great archeological site.

### The Venus of Malta & Buret

No other Siberian site is comparable to Malta in richness and diversity of art objects made of ivory. 28 feminine statuettes,, thesize of 3 to 13 cm representing fat women, women of medium proportion and elongated figurines representing thin females. There are also small figurines whose surfaces are totally covered . Heads of statuettes are ornamented by carved lines, which are usually interpreted as headdress. There are also a series of bird figurines, 14 in total, with elongated necks and short wings. A mammoth engraving on ivory blade, an ivory figurine of a wolverine, 2 elongated bird figurines and a statuette of swan are worthwhile to mention. Buret', Malta's twin site located on the opposite bank of the Angara, produced 4 ivory female figurines, ranging 4 to 12 cm in height, the





Atalanka village - birthplace of Valentin Rasputin,  
famous contemporary Russian author

*most remarkable object being an elongated statuette, covered by rows of incisions of half-moon shape. Facial details and hood are clearly visible. In addition the same ivory bird figurine as those of Malta was found!*

*Malta yielded a beautiful specimen of a large ivory plate as well.*

**The Malta Plate:** *In the Hermitage in St. Petersburg a plate of mammoth bone with spiral figures of many dozens of dots is stored . It was found in 1929 in village of Malta. The age of the plate is more than 15 thousand years. Malta is located on the same latitude as Stonehenge. Main solar and lunar directions for Stonehenge and for the “mammoth plate” coincide. The plate could be used also as a “personal Stonehenge”-a micro observatory, simplified pragmatic “calendar” for wide use. The most careful analysis of the plate done by Russian professor Larichev (1989) concluded: advanced knowledge about the visible movements of the star sky*





*are fixed on the plate, which are a result of exact long-term observation of the Sun, Moon and visible planets. The precision of registration and representation of the information is quite enough for a sure prediction of the lunar and solar eclipse! Such form of fixing and transfer of the information allowed more than 10 000 years ago to accumulate, apply and transmit knowledge without alphabet and another forms of writing !*

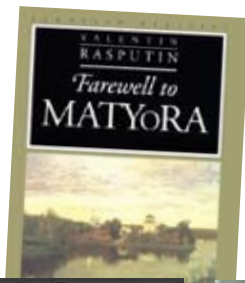
Next place where we make our first stop will be at the small town of Usoliye-Sibirskoye ( meaning “Salt of Siberia) founded in 1669 by the Mikhalev brothers after they had obtained the governor’s permission to start the saltery works on the Red Island of the river. Salt works was the main trade here until 1840-s when the first health resort was established here, and later in 1888 matches and plywood production was started. At present, the town of UU-soliye main industry is mining and chemical machinery.

Then en route there will be a town of Svirsk (139 km from Irkutsk) with population of 19,5 thousand people whose main jobs are with the accumulator, galvanics and batteries manufacturing factory. Here we will see the first public ferry across the Angara river. Very soon after Svirsk the Angara river becomes wider signifying that we already entered the waters of the “new, changed” Angara river – i.e. the Bratsk water reservoir sprawling across the Irkutsk Oblast.

Our next stop shall be at districtal town of Balagansk ( 4.2. thousand inhabitants) located 262 km from Irkutsk, its original village founded as the Cossacks outpost in 1654 , but before the appearance of manmade sea it had been removed 35 km away from its original location. Now the town’s population mainly works at fish processing factory and fishes in the river.

The Angara River is the only drainage for Lake Baikal, and flows 1840 km from Irkutsk to the Yenisei River at

Malta Plate



Learning Russian-Siberian songs at the host village family

Michail Hill, captain of the hydrofoil, has been for over 25 years on the staff of public passenger service going down and up the Angara river. Everyone en route knows him well.



Strelka. This watershed holds more water than any other in the world, and produces oceanic outflow that exceeds by 1.5 times the combined watershed outflow of the Mississippi-Missouri in the United States.

We get off for a walk at one of the villages – Ust-Uda which, probably, comprised the talents and unique Russian characters of people from other 6 villages that were flooded by the manmade sea and which inhabitants and their houses had been moved to the present day Ust-Uda. Located 20 km farther than Balagansk on the opposite side of the Angara Ust-Uda is famed, first of all, for great Soviet and Russian author and, later, environmentalist Valentin Rasputin who had been born here.

Besides, the village was the place of the exile of Josef Stalin. Here, the future ‘Father of All Nations’ Stalin while celebrating in exile his 24-th birthday on December, 21, 1903, received the first letter from Vladimir Lenin – as Stalin later would say that had been his first acquaint-

ance with great Lenin – though virtual one. In less than a month after receiving Lenin’s letter Stalin flew away from the exile (ask your guide about that interesting story of how Stalin managed to escape...) The wooden house in which Stalin lived is still preserved in New Uda village..

Ust-Uda is really a unique place in Siberia, rich in gifted and prominent people who live there. In the village there’s a Cossacks detachment which elders train youngsters how to ride horses and take care of them, how to master the cold arms – sabers, teach the history of the role of Cossacks in Russia, learn patriotic songs, carry on competitions. (here one can hear of their Cossack songs <http://www.kazak-uda.lact.ru/e/409736-lyubo>).

A number of Russian national and professional holidays and festivals are widely celebrated here. Among them, it’s worth noting a festival of Ploughman which gathers the farmers from all the neighboring areas. The House of Culture as under the Soviets still offers circles to teach and



train arts; the local folklore ensemble “Slavinia” having nearly 100 participants is well known for their great voices and Cossack dancing far beyond its district boundaries. Local kids are talented in so-called straw-painting, tough in wrestling and chess playing.

The village is also the place where some of the best hunting laika-dogs are bred, which won many medals at specialised regional contests.

Another local celebrity is Vassiliy Romanov who alone constructed two small aircrafts and a helicopter.

We will have more than an hour to walk through Ust-Uda to take pictures and visit small local studies museum often referred to as The Museum of the Angara, as well as see a beautiful wooden church of the Kazan God Mother Icon restored in 2006.

Later in the evening we shall be arriving at the docks of Bratsk city



Some of the best in Siberia "laika"-hunting dogs from Ust-Uda





## Day 7

# Touring the City of Brothers largest one in the north of Irkutsk region

Today first we visit the electrical power plant in Bratsk which dam is 106 m high and creates a gigantic lake of over 550 km length, covering 5470 sq. km of land with more than 48 cubic km of water. Maximum electrical power of 4,500 MW more than exceeds Lenin's paroles upon electrification of the whole country. Cuban leader Fidel Castro while on his tour of the Soviet Union specially visited Bratsk to commemorate the work of the dam's builders whom he addressed in his speech at Bratsk Stadium on May,13,1963.

After the last picture are taken inside and outside the

Plant our tour of the Bratsk Power station will end up. There is a long penstock of 5140 meters from reservoir of the dam to power generation units as well as railway track and automobile road on the upper sides of the dam's which we will later drive on.

Next after 30 minutes drive we will visit the "Angara Village" ethnographic museum in the Open air which contains original wooden structures of Russian early explorers of Siberia and those of Evenk and Buryat people complete with items and utensils of everyday life used in the long past.

After a nice tour of this great museum located on the river bank we'll drive to have lunch in the picturesque setting of the Lukomoriye (meaning "fancy cove") Holiday Center that has a nice restaurant with a great cuisine – Siberian nad European, famed for its very delicious and aesthetic looking cakes.

After lunch we will still have time to explore more of the



The "Angara Village" open-air museum of original wooden houses & households near Bratsk brings together lots of people during holidays and ethnic festivals

city, visit the famous Bratsk pastry store and well-known in Siberia Bratsk brewery. After dinner and check out from the hotel we will depart to the railway station to take an overnight train on BAM (Baikal-Amur) railway. Built as a strategic alternative route to the Trans-Siberian Railway, especially to the vulnerable sections close to the border with China, BAM's costs were estimated at \$14 billion, and it was built with special, durable tracks since much of it was built over permafrost.

Our overnight train ride will take us to the town of Severobaikalsk located in the northernmost tip of Lake Baikal.

❖ *The name of Bratsk means a place where Buryats live (Bratsi in the 17th century Russian), and the Bratsi in Russian means "brothers". The first Russians came to this place in 1623. It was a unit of 40 soldiers sent there to find out whether one could impose a tax on the Buryats living there. In 1636, the first fort was built there at the confluence of the Oka and Angara rivers to enforce the tax collection from natives. In 1640's there were already some peasants at the fort growing crops, and in 1690 a monastery was built. In 1702, there were 15 communities in the Bratsk area with 128 households. In 1805, the newly established Bratsk komissarstvo (administrative unit) had 5210 inhabitants. In 1910, there were 60 communities with 14,006 people (including 5596 political exiles!).*



## Day 8

# Journey on BAM railway through the wilderness to the Upper Angara River

◆ The whole night and morning we journey across a vast wilderness of taiga forest and mountain ranges, past remote settlements, through tunnels and across permafrost to Severobaikalsk . Your informative local guide that accompanies you throughout the trip will be there to tell you about the places and villages en route, help you feel comfortable while on the train. Upon arrival in Severobaikalsk which appeared in the early 1970s, as workers arrived to work on the BAM, we'll take our transfer to and check in at a cozy “Golden Fish” guest lodge complex , have lunch and some time at leisure before touring the town of Severobaikalsk. Before dinner you will still have time to explore the downtown on your own.


◆ **Baikal Amur Mainline**  
*The BAM ( Baikal-Amur Mainline) represented a major engineering achievement through very difficult terrain, and become partially operational in 1984 though work continued through the 1990s to upgrade this line, as well as adding a Little BAM branch line (830 km) which provide rail access to Yakutia. Traversing Eastern Siberia and the Russian Far East, the 4,234 km (2,305 m.) long BAM runs about 380 to 480 miles north of and parallel with the Trans-Siberian railway.*



## Day 9

# Visit local community of the Evenk people and Russian village of Baikalskoye.

◆ On this day we shall be exploring the upper Angara river reaches where the Evenk community lives, visit their cultural center, if we're lucky enough, we may see reindeer the Evenks raise and nomads with them to the seasonal pastures. The next half of the day we shall be driving to see the village of Baikalsoye – the earliest Russian settlement in the northern Baikal, where we will have dinner at the local family.

 Irkutsk region is bordered by Krasnoyarsk Territory, Chita Region, the Republic of Sakha (see Yakutia), the Autonomous Republic of Tuva, and the Buryat Republic. The region comprises the Ust-Orda Buryat Autonomous Area and 33 districts.

About 86 percent of the region is forested, and timber resources are estimated at more than 8 billion cubic meters. The climate is continental, with extreme winter and summer temperatures. The population of the Irkutsk region is 2.8 million (about 2 percent of Russia's total population), with major centres in Irkutsk (587,000) Angarsk (272,000), Bratsk (283,000), and Ust-Ilimsk (195,000). Four other towns (Ust-Ilimsk, Cheremkovo, Ust-Kut, and Tulun) have populations between 50,000 and 100,000. The overall population density is 3.7 persons per square km, compared to 8.7 in Russia as a whole. The social and political situation of the region is considered to be among the most stable in Russia.

At the beginning of the century, much of the region's development was connected with the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway, which crosses the southern part of the region, and the Baikal-Amur Railway branch line, which crosses the region's northern districts. The Trans-Siberian Railway remains the most important transportation network in the region and annually services more than 57 million tons of freight, mostly timber, coal, oil products, ferrous and nonferrous metals, and construction materials.

Airports in Irkutsk, Bratsk, and Ust-Ulimsk serve all classes of aircraft and offer direct international flights to Beijing, Shenyang, Nigata, Seoul, and Ulan-Bator.

Roads are used for overland freight to western Russia, as well as to China and Mongolia.



Day 10

## Grand Baikal Circumnavigation — en route from the Upper to Lower Gems of the Holy Sea



Today after early morning boarding the hydrofoil, we will spend the whole day and upcoming evening on Baikal's full-length cruise from its north to south. Finally, late in the evening upon arriving in the docks in Irkutsk we'll manage to close up the Angara Triangle on our trip in the area of huge, intangible love...

Серия «Приглашает Иркутская область». Выпуск 1. Тираж 1000 экз. Паспорт туристского маршрута «Ангарский треугольник» подготовлен Сибирским институтом планирования и развития туризма. Автор идеи маршрута «Ангарский треугольник» и перевода на английский - Алексей Никифоров, директор турфирмы «Абсолютная Сибирь».

The "Angara Triangle" tour product was developed thanks to funding made available by Irkutsk Region Government Agency for Tourism (tmarket@govirk.ru), under auspices of Siberia Tourism Planning & Development Institute, by "Absolute Siberia" Ltd. international licensed tour operator (travel@absolute-siberia.com), designed & edited by Expedition InterBaikal Agency (expedition@interbaikal.irkutsk.ru).

Серия издается по заказу Агентства по туризму Иркутской области для региональных туроператоров и муниципальных образований, с целью пропаганды туристско-рекреационных ресурсов Прибайкалья. Распространяется бесплатно на туристских выставках.