

By Bike via Chersky Peak on Nature Lovers' Trip

Duration: 6 days; Group size: min.
5 - max. 10 persons; Availability: June, 05 - August, 10



The tour itinerary below besides offering just a good opportunity to bike Lake Baikal southernmost part around on newly developed combined route highlights the Old Round Baikal Railway Section which alongside with its fantastic scenery and unique railway engineering constructions dating back to the beginning of last century is also famous as habitats of rare and endangered species of animal, plant life as well as for outstanding geological formations. Another highlight that the tour offers is ascending by bike to the Chersky Peak – the highest peak of Khamar-Daban Mountains (2090 m), as well as a chance to relax on the shore of small, warm and crystal clear lakes amidst gorgeous scenery and being in very close proximity to lake Baikal. And certainly during the tour you won't miss an opportunity to explore most popular tourist sites of Lake Baikal and Irkutsk, and moreover you'll enjoy a mini-cruise across Lake Baikal from its eastern shore to the western one.

The tour is designed for those who have experience in biking, and will require some strenuous though short running efforts while biking up the mountain slope on the way to Chersky Peak.

Suggested Itinerary

Day 1

Upon arrival we meet you with professional bi-lingual guide, assist with the luggage, load your bikes on the truck and after having breakfast get ourselves on the coach for 1.5 hour transfer to the start of our biking trip.

We get off the coach with our bikes near the Passage Railway station. Check our bikes, cross the rails and start biking along the picturesque trail into the taiga-woods of Baikal Mountain Range. The trail gradually goes down along the Krutaya Guba rivulet to reach Lake Baikal in 13 km after the start. Halfway to the shore of Lake Baikal we cross the stream and continue our smooth descend by bike further to the lake. Before lunch we come out to the shore to enjoy splendid views of lake Baikal and find ourselves on the 139-th km rails of the **Old Round Baikal Railroad** – the monument and feast of railway engineering and technical design built under the last Russian tsar and called "The



Golden Buckle of Steel Belt of Russia" (due to its enormous construction costs). Here you will see one of the most interesting railway viaducts. After relaxing a bit we have lunch prepared over the camp fire and then continue our biking trip 22 km further along the rails of this unique railroad.

On the way with few stops to take pictures we shall pass the village of Angasolka (149-th km) and some nature landmarks such as **habitats of Godlevsky's buntings and bearded partridge** enlisted in Russia's Red Book of Endangered and Protected Species, the only habitat on Lake Baikal of Siberian mole, natural associations of rare plants including endemic Alexandrov's violet or ***Cotoneaster lucidus Schlecht.***, growing in so-called **steppe eco-system** that covers here an area of about 2 hectares.

Further along the route and before reaching Kultuk station we shall be biking near the so-called "**Talov Marshes**" **Ornithological Nature Preserve**- a unique habitat of rare and endangered birds such as **black and grey cranes, mountain geese** and some other. Here in one of the picturesque bays of lake Baikal southern part we will set up our tent camp to have dinner and overnight.

Total distance to be covered today by bike is 36 km.



Day 2

After breakfast we start out biking to the Kultuk station to continue then 8 km along the paved road further to **Sludyanka town** (meaning the "Mica-Town" – Glimmer - which besides mica mineral deposits is famed for marble quarries). Upon getting to Sludyanka we visit **Private Museum of Minerals** owned and managed by the family of Zhigalov which has a unique and rich exhibition of minerals not only from Lake Baikal area and Siberia but from all over the world. Here after the tour of the museum we have lunch and then proceed by bike further.



Our destination today is the **Chersky Peak**, the highest mountain (2090 m) of **Khamar Daban Mountain Range** often called as "The Nuts' Pass" due to virgin taiga-woods with high density of 2 centuries-old Siberian Pine (locally called cedar tree cause it grows cedar cones with very delicious nuts).

Following the river of Sludyanka upstream and crossing it several times we shall pass by the marble quarries. (Note that the banks of this small Sludyanka River are well known for semiprecious and precious minerals that are often found here). Soon we shall be ascending for about 1 hour the slopes of **Kamarinsky Mountain range**. We will have lunch on the so-called **Gorelaya Polyana** (meaning "Burnt Meadow" formed by lava) from which we will enjoy excellent vistas of mountain valleys and slopes. Here we relax a bit to prepare for 1-hour further steep ascends on

the way to the site of **Meteorological Station**. Upon reaching the Meteorology Station we set up our tent camp, have lunch and overnight after a friendly party near the camp-fire, singing your songs and listening to and, perhaps, learning some local Russian ones. This evening local meteorologists from the Station can join us for dinner or the party and we may learn from them many interesting stories. (Overnight in tents)

Day 3

We wake up today to enjoy panoramic views of the sun rising over the surrounding mountain valleys. After breakfast we start out from the tent-camp heading for the **Chersky Peak** (2090 m). The trail which once under the tsar was a part of famous **Mongol Post Service Trakt** (Highway) will be a kind of serpentine path in the beginning and shall require some efforts to move the bikes. However, it's worthwhile, 'cause the descend from Chersky Peak shall exceed your expectations!

Within the next 2 hours we will find ourselves right by the Chersky peak. After some time at leisure and taking pictures of local mountain landscapes, we will start biking along the Kamarinsky range down going by the so-called Evil's Pass and lake. After another ascend we will then almost all the time go biking down the trail with some trail sections being steep enough so that you'd be recommended to use your disc brakes.

After we descend from the Kamarinsky range we will get back to Sludyanka town to have lunch here and then continue riding further 32 km northwards along good highway of Lake Baikal eastern shore with some stop en route to enjoy the

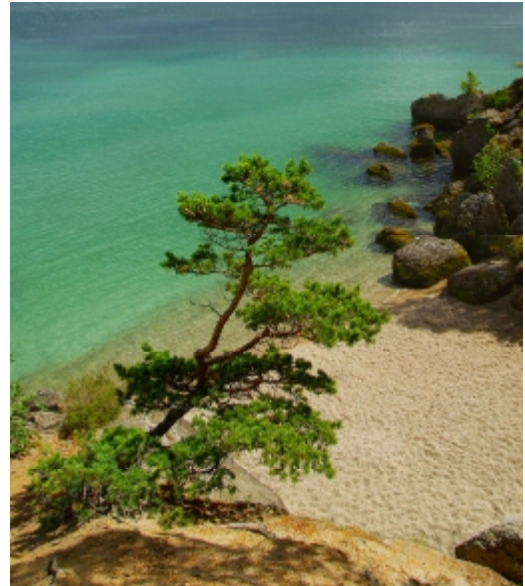


natural sights and landscape of Lake Baikal watershed. Before dinner we get to the tourist camp site located on the Utulik river where we'll have dinner and overnight in log cabins (sanitary facilities outside). This evening you will have a chance to watch how Russian vacationers and tourists spend their time at leisure, and perhaps you'll be engaged if you want in some of their activities. Also on your request your local guide can arrange fishing with locally popular fishing tackle called "korablik" meaning a "small ship vessel" in Russian. (Total distance to be covered today by bike is 57 km).

Day 4

After having an early breakfast we will start biking again for 20 km until we reach nearly half way point to the **Vydrino village**. From here we will get our transfer with bikes by vans to Snezhnaya river from which we turn right from Lake Baikal and following further along the **Snezhnaya river** bank famous for white water rafting we proceed another 8 km into the foothills of beautiful Khamar Daban Mountain range. Finally we'll find ourselves in a very picturesque natural setting - real taiga-woods fairy-tale: amidst the mountainous landscape surrounded by relict pine and poplar trees and alpine meadows nestles like in cradle a cascade of **3 small lakes!** We check in cozy and clean "**Yana's Guest House**" located right on the shore of **Emerald Lake**, have lunch and prepare for a short hike the so-called **Craig of Monomakh Hat** atop of which there's a great panoramic view of snow-topped mountains and lake Baikal and parts of Eastern Sayany Mountains – nearly 100 km visibility!

After this pleasant hike we can go bathing – the water of the Emerald Lake is as clear as it is warm, and good for bathing especially before the sunset. Then we go to the **Siberian Banya** – to enjoy its steam bath and if you want – again swim in the river after the steam bath. Dinner and overnight at the "Yana's Guest House".



Day 5

After breakfast we depart to Vydrino to get aboard boat vessel awaiting us at the boat station for nearly 3-hour transfer by water across lake Baikal – from its eastern shore to Listvyanka settlement on the western shore. During this mini-cruise across Lake Baikal you'll enjoy from the water the landscapes and be offered tea while your informative guide will tell you interesting stories about Baikal.

Upon arrival in Listvyanka we will visit **Baikal Ecology Museum** which excellent exhibition unfolds in a truly exciting story about unique features of Baikal, its species of flora and fauna, and then we will also see **Baikal fresh-water seal aquarium**.

Lunch of tasty local cuisine as per your prior choice of menu entrees will be served in water front restaurant. After lunch and seeing functioning Russian Orthodox **Church of St. Nicolas-The-Miracle-Worker** we ride by bikes to the Shaman Rock located in the outflow of the Angara River from Lake Baikal to take pictures and shop for some local souvenirs.

From here we will get on the coach for 1-hour transfer to Irkutsk while the bikes will follow us on a separate van-truck.

Upon arrival in Irkutsk we'll do a **sigheseeing tour of the city** and visit its most interesting and atmospheric sights including **Znamenskaya Russian Orthodox Cathedral** noted for its original iconostasis, grave of the so-called "Russian Columbus" Grigory Shelekhov who was an early Russian explorer of Alaska and graves of the Decembrists-revolutionaries banned to Siberia after an ill-fated attempt in 1825 to overthrow the Russian tsar.

Upon checking in at the hotel enjoy "Absolute Siberia" welcome drink. Our farewell dinner will be served in recently opened popular "Bier House" restaurant located downtown. Overnight back at the hotel.



Day 6

We'll check out from the hotel after early breakfast and depart by coach to Irkutsk airport for customs boarding the aircraft for flight back home.



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