

### Introduction:

**Irkutsk** is one of the great Siberian cities and by right considers itself the capital of Eastern Siberia. Irkutsk is laid out on the banks of the Angara River about 66 kilometers from Lake Baikal. From the moment of its founding, Irkutsk has been a commercial city. Occupying an advantageous geographic position, it has played a successful role as a commercial middleman between European Russia on one side and Yakutsk, the Transbaikal, Mongolia, China and even Alaska on the other. Throughout its history, Irkutsk has been renowned for its bustling markets and bazaars, and its merchants for their philanthropy. Now, Irkutsk is an important commercial industrial center in Eastern Siberia, carrying out trade with 70 foreign countries.

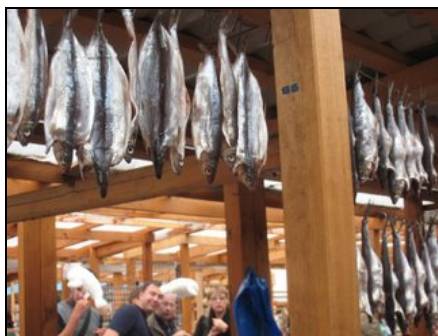
### Itinerary

#### Sightseeing city tour (4 h) (Tour code IKT - 1)

Founded in 1651 by Russian settlers as a fortress, Irkutsk today is a city that reflects the mixing of cultures - traders from the east and exiles from the west. Feel the pulse of the city where Siberian harshness is reflected in people's faces and their "soul".

**Tour includes: English speaking guide, transport from/to the accommodation in Irkutsk and entrances.**

**Best period: whole year (museums are closed Mondays)**



#### Baikal – Listvyanka village (7 h) (Tour code IKT - 2)

The highway from Irkutsk to Lake Baikal goes through picturesque taiga-forest up and down high hills and in about 1 hour you come to the Museum of Wooden Architecture (47th km of Baikal Highway from Irkutsk and 23rd km from Listvyanka). This museum in the open air has a large collection of original wooden houses equipped with the old-style furniture and domestic utensils. They were brought from several local villages. The museum shows the style of life in the 16th to 19th century Russian villages and Buryat and Evenk gers. You can observe the interiors of a Russian fort and the 15th century watchtower, a Siberian izba (house) and a chapel, a Shaman yurt (ger) and other interesting things.

Next stop is at a viewpoint facing the Shaman Cliff, at the source of the Angara River. A small but tourist-wise Listvyanka Village is located on the shore of Lake Baikal in 70 km south-east of Irkutsk. This old-style Siberian village is famous for its trade history. From the 18th century its ferry took merchants across the lake to Mongolia and China and the Far East. We also visit an old wooden Church of Saint Nicolas who is supposed to be a patron of travellers.

In Listvyanka Village, a variety of hot- or cold-smoked and salted Omul-fish and grayling fish is on sale. A great snack on the shore is a delicacy of Lake Baikal – just smoked Omul-fish barbecue style. Several private cafes and restaurants offer traditional Siberian or European cuisine. To feel the spirit of Siberia you should taste pelmeny (stuffed dumplings), pirozhki (pasties with cabbage, or meat, or berries), sandwiches with caviar.



**Tour includes: English speaking guide, transport from/to the accommodation in Irkutsk and entrances .**  
**Best period: whole year**

**Bol'shye Koty Settlement (2 d)**  
**(Tour code IKT – 3)**

The old gold digging settlement of Bol'shiye Koty is the destination for this trip. It is situated about 100 km south-east of Irkutsk and the only way to get there is by a hydrofoil in summer time (about 25<sup>th</sup> of May – 25<sup>th</sup> of September), or if you like on foot. During winter (usually to the end of January) Lake Baikal freezes over and till the end of March or the middle of April it is possible to go there on ice – on foot, ski, skates or by car. In Bol'shiye Koty Settlement there are ruins of an old closed gold mine, a small museum of fauna of the Baikal and a biological research center. The biggest experience though is in the surrounding nature, where you have plenty of possibilities of both relaxing and seeing the nature. There are possibilities for hiking in the surrounding mountains and to the cave. There are also possibilities of prolonging the stay in Bol'shiye Koty.

**1<sup>st</sup> day:** Arrival in Irkutsk. Transfer to the port in Irkutsk. Departure by hydrofoil boat to Bol'shiye Koty (about 1 hr 20 min). Accommodation in a family in Bol'shiye Koty for a night with full board.

**2<sup>nd</sup> day:** In the middle of the day catch the hydrofoil back to Listvyanka (about 20 min), where picked up by a guide with a car. Tour of Listvyanka Village (market, church). Return by car to Irkutsk with a stop on the way at the open-air Museum of wooden Russian Architecture and Ethnography "Tal'tsi". Accommodation in Irkutsk - optional.

**3<sup>rd</sup> day:** Prolongation of the stay or transfer to the airport or train station.



**Tour includes: English speaking guide, transport from/to the accommodation in Irkutsk, ticket for the hydrofoil.**

**Best period: 27/5 – 31/9**

**Trekking to Tchersky Peak (3-4 d)**  
**(Tour code IKT – 4 - IKT – 5)**

To get to the start point of the tour you take a local electric train to Slyudyanka Town (3 hours on the way). Along the Slyudyanka River there is an old forest road. You trek along the beautiful Slyudyanka River Valley, pass white marble cliffs of Slyudyanka River, pass marble open-cast mine and picturesque flanks. Several times you cross the river – it's easy while low tide. In rainy summer while high water-level there are temporary bridges. We make a camp nearby of the weather station. In the morning we leave luggage at the station and trek to steep mountain lacet and along the narrow neck to the peak. The peak looks like a volcano extinct many millions years ago. In the crater there is a heart-shaped lake with a waterfall. While fair weather one can enjoy a fantastic view from the peak: at Lake Baikal and Utulik Village from one side and snow peaks of three-thousand meter high mountains of Eastern Sayan Mountain Range and mountain chains of Khamar-Daban Mountain Range from another side. Then you can come down to Tchertovo (Russian for "Devil") Lake (5 km). Lunch nearby Tchertovo Lake. To see waterfalls you go down to Podkomarnaya River (15 m). The most impressive one is the lower cascade: water falls from height of 80 meters in a slit not more than 1 meter wide. The tour take place on the territory protected within the Baikalsky National Park.

**1<sup>st</sup> day:** Transfer to train station. 09:00 AM departure by local train to Slyudyanka. Trek up to the mountains (1430 m) to the weather station (18 km). O/N in a tent.

**2<sup>nd</sup> day:** Trek to steep mountain lacet (4 km), and along the narrow neck to the peak. Come back to the camp. O/N in a tent.

**3<sup>rd</sup> day:** Then you can come down to Tchertovo Lake (5 km) or/and to Podkomarnaya River to see waterfalls. Come back to the camp. O/N in a tent.

**4<sup>th</sup> day:** Come down to Slyudyanka Town. Return to Irkutsk by local train.



**Tour includes: English speaking mountain guide, full board from the breakfast of day 1, to the breakfast of day 3, transfer from the accommodation in Irkutsk, train tickets.**

**Best period: 25/6 – 30/8**

**Trekking on Baikal trail. Bol'shoye Goloustnoye – Bol'shiye Koty (4 d)  
(Tour code IKT – 6)**



With a guide you get to the tour starting point - Bol'shoye Goloustnoye Settlement by a daily public bus (3 hrs on the way). You stay for a night in a family and start trekking next morning.

First 4 km of a forest road along the Baikal shore are quite bad, then the road becomes picturesque and goes up to 200 metres above lake-level, leaving behind a few steep and rocky mountainsides of the Primorsky Mountain Ridge, home to rich wild life and abundant plant life. During the trip you will see many attractions, beautiful scenery and remarkable landscapes. Bol'shoy and Maly Kadi'l'ny Capes are famous for caves. You pass by Tchayachy Cliff (30 m) with 1 meter wide rocky artificial hollow Chyortov Most (Russian for "Devil Bridge"). Skriper Cliff, an isolated mountain mass consists of rare in the Lake Baikal conglomerate of Jurassic period. At the height of 200 meters there is a cave where traces of residence of primitive man have been founded. The tour ends at Bol'shiye Koty Settlement where you stay for a night in a family. You come back to Irkutsk by a hydrofoil. Possible an extra day trekking (on 4<sup>th</sup> day) from Bol'shiye Koty to Listvyanka (18 km).

The tour take place on the territory protected within the Pribaikalsky National Park.

**1<sup>st</sup> day:** Transfer to bus station. 17:00: Departure by public bus to Bol'shoye Goloustnoye Settlement (3 hrs). O/N in a family in Bol'shoye Goloustnoye.

**2<sup>nd</sup> day:** Hiking from Bol'shoye Goloustnoye to Kadi'l'ny Cape (about 18 km). O/N in a tent (upon a request possible O/N in a house - optional).

**3<sup>rd</sup> day:** Hiking from Kadi'l'ny Cape to Bol'shiye Koty Settlement (about 18 km). Visit Scriper Cliff. O/N in a family in Bol'shiye Koty.

**4<sup>th</sup> day:** Return to Irkutsk by hydrofoil (1 hrs 20 min). Accommodation in Irkutsk - optional.

**Tour includes: English speaking mountain guide, full board from the diner of day 1, to the breakfast of day 3, transfer from the accommodation in Irkutsk, bus tickets, ticket for a hydrofoil, tent .**

**Best period: 25/6 – 30/8**

**Tour to Khujir Settlement on Olkhon Island (4 d)  
(Tour code IKT – 7)**

The biggest and probably most interesting island in the Lake Baikal is called Olkhon. The road to Olkhon is a bit tiresome, 6-8 hours in a bus, but the trip can also be full of new and strange experiences. See how the landscape changes with time and watch how villages appear out of nowhere, just to disappear just as fast in the horizon. The island itself is about 70 km long and 35 km wide. To get there you need to pass Maloe More (Russian for "the Small Sea") by ferry, a trip of about 20 minutes. While you are waiting for the ferry you can take the first spectacular pictures, and get a feeling of the nature that is awaiting you. It is only since this year that power lines to the mainland has been established, which is why many of the present day comfort is not something you should take for granted, but this only adds to the huge experience it is to visit the island of Olkhon. Accommodation will be in the main village of Khuzir where there are about 1500 citizens. The island is full of nature and mysticism. Many of the areas on the island have a legend attached to them and the island is also a gathering place for shamanistic rituals. The possibilities for unique experiences on the island are many.



**1<sup>st</sup> day:** 8:20 AM: Transfer to bus station. 9:00 AM Departure from Irkutsk by a public bus (6-8 hrs). Arrival at Khujir Settlement during the afternoon. The rest of the day is at your own disposal.

**2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> day:** For you own disposal.

**4<sup>th</sup> day:** Departure from Khujir Settlement early in the morning and arrival in Irkutsk during the afternoon.

**Tour includes: Transfer from the accommodation or the bus station in Irkutsk, bus/ferry tickets, 3 nights accommodation in Khujir with full board.**

**Best period: 20/5 – 15/10 and 20/1 – 20/3**