Seals & Ice Floes — Detailed description

Trip Length: 6 Group: 5-12 Departure: Fixed Period: April

Trip overview

During Baikal's off-season, we invite you to discover a majestic period when all nature of Baikal, from every leaf to cute animals, awakens from winter cold and dark nights to be filled with light and warmth. You will be a witness of this amazing phenomenon and go along the most beautiful and remote routes, that are accessible only to a small number of people. Our expedition is dedicated to the unique nature and the pacifying energy of Baikal. The Baikal seal as the main symbol of Baikal and its embodiment will become our guiding star in our expedition.

Lake Baikal is the only place on Earth where it is possible to observe the local endemic, the lake's freshwater seal. To our time scientists could not solve the riddle of its appearance in the lake. However, many researchers support the hypothesis that the seals went down the Yenisei River from the Arctic Ocean and adapted themselves to the conditions of the freshwater lake.

In the spring Baikal seals bask in the bright and warm sun on the drifting ice floes of Lake Baikal. After a long winter, they can finally get to the surface where they like to spend most of their time. We will follow in the footprints of the seal to meet it and take stunning photos, one of the unique animals in the world. You can easily call Baikal seal as the most photogenic and cute animal you have ever seen in your life. For our photo tour we will use an old technique of seal hunters, the only difference is that you will only armed with your cameras, wearing special white costumes!

The tour is led by Pavel Ageychenko, founder of BaikalNature, who will share with you his secrets as he has already met Baikal seals in the wild many times.

Together you will take comfortable and safe transport "hovercrafts", that are capable for riding on ice, land and water, to discover the picturesque western coast of Lake Baikal with its cozy bays and capes, the largest island Olkhon, the Maloye More and the Big Sea of Baikal, which is just separated by the Olkhon Island. The highlight of the tour will be crossing the lake in its deepest part and visiting the largest rookery of the Baikal seal, where you will spend several nights in a cozy base. Also, you will discover the pearl of the eastern shore of Lake Baikal - Chyrvykuysky Bay with its hot springs. We will not miss the opportunity to relaxing here, and you can also try ice fishing for the first time!

Tour is a kind of expedition, as the route may vary depending on the conditions, but we guarantee vivid emotions, harmony and incredible landscapes. And of course, if we are lucky, we will definitely meet the main symbol - Baikal seal!

Highlights

- Tour led by Pavel Ageychenko, the founder of BaikalNature
- Possiblity to observe Baikal seals in the wild
- Wonderful itinerary through the most remoted areas of Lake Baikal
- Visit of Lake Baikal in the off-season period
- Travelling by comfortable and safe hovecrafts
- Baikal landscapes with drifting ice
- Possiblity to try ice-fishing on the Chyvyrkysky Gulf
- Relaxing in the hot springs
- Two overnights in the cozy guest house on Ushkany islands
- Discovery of Small and Big sea of Lake Baikal

Tour type

DISCOVERYNATURE

Difficulty

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Moderately Easy - 1-3 hours of physical activity daily

Comfort

Standard — most of nights in comfortable rooms, some nights in tents or rooms with shared WC.

Begining / end of the tour

Tour starts: Irkutsk, End of the tour: Irkutsk

Program

Day 1 — First meeting with Lake Baikal

09:30 — Arrival in Irkutsk
10:00 — DEPARTURE TO THE LISTVYANKA VILLAGE
11:00 — Departure by Hovercraft along the western coast of Lake Baikal
13:00 — Lunch-picnic
14:00 — Continuation of the way to MRS village
16:00 — Arrival at the base
19:00 — Dinner at the resort
20:00 — Russian banya

Overnight at the resort

Hotels: Accommodation at the resort "Vorobyevy Gory", Dome home for 2 persons
Comfort: Comfortable accommodation, WC and bath / shower in room

Day 2 — The largest island on Lake Baikal

09:00 — Breakfast at the resort
11:00 — Start of photo hunting
13:00 — Lunch-picnic
14:00 — Discovery of Small sea and visit of ice caves
17:00 — Accommodation in the hotel
19:00 — Dinner in the hotel (Not included)

Overnight in the hotel

Hotels: Accomodation in the guesthouse U Lukomorya, Twin room
Comfort: Comfortable accommodation, WC and bath / shower in room

Day 3 — Towards Ushkany islands

09:00 — Breakfast in the hotel
11:00 — Way to the Great Baikal
13:00 — Lunch - picnic
14:00 — Continuation of the way and search of the seals.
17:00 — Arrival and accommodation on Uskany islands
19:00 — Dinner in the guest house
20:00 — Russian banya

Overnight in the guest house

Hotels: Accommodation in the homestead, Room in the house
Comfort: Simple comfort accommodation, toilet outdoors, banya

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Day 4 — Scenic Gulf Chyvyrkuysky

09:00 — Breakfast
10:00 — Explore the area of the gulf Chivyrkuysky
13:00 — Lunch - picnic
14:00 — Ice-fishing
16:00 — Bathing in the hot springs
19:00 — Homemade dinner
Overnight in the guest house

Hotels: Accommodation in the homestead, Room in the house
Comfort: Simple comfort accommodation, toilet outdoors, banya

Day 5 — Final day of photo hunting

09:00 — Breakfast
10:00 — Return way to Olkhon island.
13:00 — Lunch - picnic
14:00 — Continuation of the way
17:00 — Arrival in MRS and accommodation at the resort
19:00 — Festive dinner
Overnight at the resort

Hotels: Accommodation at the resort Naratey, Twin comfort room
Comfort: Comfortable accommodation, WC and bath / shower in room

Day 6 — Goodbye Lake Baikal

09:00 — Breakfast
11:00 — Transfer to Irkutsk
16:00 — Arrival in Irkutsk and transfer to the airport

Departures

Start	End	Basic price per person
16.04.2022	21.04.2022	155900.00 RUB

Note

The price is given for the group of 6 people. If there are less people, the price will be recalculated accordingly. The route can vary depending of ice and weather condition. On some part of the route there is no mobile connection (3-4 days).

What's included

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Price includes

- English-speaking guide
- Russian-spaking guide
- Accommodation as per itinerary
- Excursions and visits as per itinerary
- Nature reserves and parks entrance permissions
- Bathing in springs
- Airplane/ train tickets
- Accident insurance
- Letter of invitation
- Bathing in hot springs
- Meals according to the program

Price does not include

- English-speaking guide
- Meals as per itinerary
- Personal expenses and tips
- Airline tickets

Checklist & Equipment

You will need in Russia in winter:

- to protect yourself from the cold weather;
- to protect yourself from the wind;
- to protect your feet from moisture;
- to protect yourself from the sun's reflection from ice and snow.

Allow the system of "three layers":

- The first layer, called "second skin", determines the performance of the other two layers. It will transport sweat to the next layer and dry quickly to avoid cooling after exercise. Therefore forget the cotton retains moisture in the skin and choose underwear in synthetic fabrics.
- The second layer must keep the heat of the body as long as possible. Warm synthetic or mixed (wool or fleece turtleneck sweater) fabrics, that dry quickly, are preferable.
- The third layer should protect you against wind and moisture. Choose a jacket, long enough, 100% waterproof, preferably with hood.

Recommended checklist

underwear, socks (several pairs)
pants, long sleeve jacket/tracksuit
comfortable shoes for trekking
raincoat / windproof and waterproof jacket with HOOD!
sunglasses
sunscreen and lip balm
swimsuit / swim trunks
towel
water bottle/flask
spray against mosquitoes and ticks (for summer outdoor tours)
fleece jacket/sweater with collar
warm mittens (for convenience, thin gloves and a second layer of mittens with fur) / ski gloves
fleece balaclava
4
5
7
8

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9
12
13
17
20
21

Meals

In the canteen at the inns, fresh local products.
Lunch cooked on an open fire.

Visa

You need a tourist visa to travel to Russia. It can be issued for a maximum period of 30 days. Your passport has to be valid for at least six months after the expiry date of your visa and to have at least two blank pages.

BaikalNature offers visa support and has created "BaikalNature letter of invitation" package. If you buy a BaikalNature tour, this package is absolutely free; when you buy any other BaikalNature service, you will have to pay for this package.
For questions regarding obtaining an electronic visa, please contact your tour manager.

Money

The Russian currency is ruble. The cost of travel and other services is always fixed in rubles. Please note that cards from foreign banks do not work in Russia at the moment. Tourists can obtain a bank card from a Russian bank in advance or travel with cash. If you have euros or dollars with you, exchange offices will allow you to change them easily in the cities. It is also worth noting that the exchange rate at airports is usually not the most favorable. It is better to exchange in big cities (you can check the current exchange rate online). Important! Only new banknotes without defects or any traces are accepted for exchange.

Tipping

All persons who compose the BaikalNature travel team (guides, drivers, cooks, etc.) are paid a decent wage for their services and do not expect any tips from you. So you have no obligation to leave anything. If you really want to express your satisfaction by leaving a gratuity, and if it is in foreign currency, be aware that torn or glued coins and banknotes cannot be exchanged. Anyway, thank you for your tips, left at your discretion in envelopes.

Health

You need to get a health examination before a great trip. Consult your doctor. Get a dental checkup. If you have health problems that could worsen during the trip, make sure you have taken all your medications with you.

Medical Form

No particular physical condition is required.

Emergency Contact

You can contact BaikalNature by phone: +7 924 531 87 01 (What's App, Telegram, Viber)
In addition, your call will be forwarded to your manager, reachable 7/7.

Legal Mentions

Professional Guarantees: BaikalNature LLC (ООО "БайкалНейче"), United Federal Register of Tour Operators number: RTO 009402. Financial Guarantee: "Gaide insurance company" JSC (АО "Страховая компания Гайде"). Insurance contract N 4875/2422-49 from August 6, 2024. Amount of coverage: 500 000 RUB. Legal and actual address: BaikalNature LLC, 55 Dekabrskikh Sobyti Str., office 204.1 664007 Irkutsk Russia

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Cancellation Options

The cancellation options are:

- more than 40 days before departure - 30 % of the tour price,
- 39 - 10 days before departure - 60 % of the tour price,
- less than 10 days before departure - 100 % of the tour price.

Security

Your safety is very important to us! During the trip we ask you to follow the guide's advice, read the instructions carefully and follow the group. If you have any questions or experience any discomfort, please notify your guide or tour-manager immediately.

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