

# Lake Baikal

*The oldest, the deepest and the most impressive.  
All these characteristics apply to the famous  
Siberian Lake Baikal, which its residents call a  
freshwater sea.*







**Why the north shore:** Because it is cool! Thousands and thousands of tourists come to the south coast each year. They usually visit the Siberian capital Irkutsk and touch the lake's water in Listvyanka. Some hundreds come also to the lake's biggest island, Ol'khon, but only a few people come to the north, where tourists are still rare, tourist services almost absent and accommodation available mostly only under the beautiful sky. But, trust me, the north is really worth seeing!

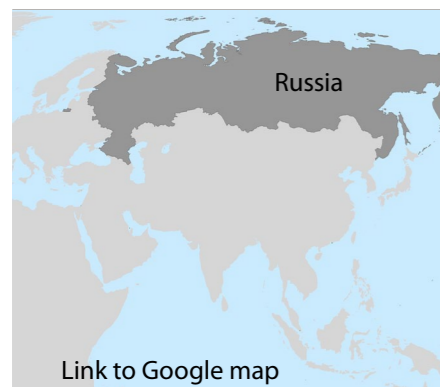
The northeast coast has one striking feature: the sunsets are usually much more interesting than the sunrises as you can see the sun on the lake's western shore. However, some of the most impressive photography of dawns and morning light I have

experienced in my life were on the Frolikha Lake, which is about 8 km from the very beautiful Ayaya bay, on Lake Baikal's east coast. It is a charming, calm, deep and highly transparent glacial lake, surrounded by high hills. I am quite sure that this is one of the best photographic locations in all of Russia. By the way, in the language of the old Evenks, people living here in the past, Ayaya means very beautiful". And it is.

Not only for a photographer, Yarki also is a very attractive place in the very north, a sandy island several kilometres long but only a few meters wide. The best feature of this place is a broad view of the lake, framed by high mountains on both sides. One point I wish to emphasize here is that

the lake is about 80 kilometres wide. As you can imagine, it is easy fill your viewfinder with the whole of the scene's dynamic range. Despite the fact that I have never used one in my life, in this case it would be sensible to add a neutral density gradient filter to your camera bag. It might be

**Preceding page** Nikon D300  
Nikon 12-24 @ 12mm  
f/11, 4sec, ISO 200  
**Above** Nikon D300  
Nikon 12-24mm @ 17mm  
f/11, 1/15sec, ISO 200  
**Right** Nikon D300  
Nikon 12-24mm @ 12mm  
f/4, 1/400sec, ISO 200



[Link to Google map](#)

### How to get there

If you are coming from the West, probably the best choice is to take the popular Trans Siberian railway in Moscow it takes about 4 days. But no matter which method of transport you choose, you will probably have to go to Nizhneangarsk, the very old village near to the city Severobaikalsk, which you can reach by train, car, air plane, boat and hydrofoil or even by the ice road. New travel guides, both from Lonely Planet and Bradt, list a lot of transport possibilities. Severobaikalsk and Nizhneangarsk are almost the only towns on the northern shore where people live during the whole year.

the perfect opportunity to use one.

**When to go:** We visited Lake Baikal during an "Indian Summer", as the number of mosquitoes is significantly lower than during the hot summer time. Most of the other hikers are usually gone and the weather is still nice. However, next time I should like to see Lake Baikal in the winter, when it is quite normal to walk over the more than one-meter thick ice covering the lake but moving from one place to another might be an issue. Probably the most popular option is just hiking along the shore, with all your stuff on your back.

Two Germans, Tom Umbreit and Frank Fabian, who founded a special association called Baikalplan, were strongly attracted to hiking along the north coast. These guys had the

idea of building a trail around the coast, Frolikha Coastline Adventure Track (F.A.C.T.). Thanks to them, you can now hike almost 100 km around the lake, impossible before due to the taiga jungle. Moreover, they are also planning to renovate some of the old wooden huts and one of the old wooden fisherman's houses on the west coast. Another option for getting about during summer is to rent a big boat: while we were there we met a photography expedition of 7 photographers from Moscow, who rented a motor catamaran with a guide. You can also do what we did: take your own small canoes with tents and enjoy the wilderness of the Baikal's cold water. Boating on your own might not look ideal for photographers, but that is not true. Despite the fact that

you have to work a lot during the day, at sunrise and sunset there are ample opportunities for photography. Moreover, with your own small boat you can easily change your position and take pictures from small sandy islands, located several hundred meters from the most northern shore, such as Dagary Bay and Yarki Island.

**What are the risks you have to consider:** Well, there are bears, but these creatures are really wild and usually afraid of people. When they learn of your presence, they are likely to avoid conflict whenever possible you decide to go boating on your own, please, read a lot of instructions about it, as you really need to have some skills and previous experience with water. To give you an example: we were almost overturned half a kilometre from the shore by waves 3 meters high. The water is really cold, and an average European could swim there only for a few minutes. The biggest risk from Lake Baikal is obvious: you will fall desperately in love with its beauty and untouched nature, so that you will have to return there as often as possible.



### About Petr Jan Juracka

I have loved nature since I was very small, and always wanted to bring it into my home with me. When our house was full of various animals and plants, my parents suggested mildly that I should start taking photographs instead of keeping salamanders at my table. And so that is how I became passionate about photography in my childhood. Although I also teach landscape photography in the beautiful landscapes of Bohemian Switzerland, my full time job consists of scientific microphotography, which combines both my passions and keeps me happy with the job. In addition, I am one of the official photographers of the Prague Zoological Garden: so photography truly belongs to all parts of my life. It is my way of enjoying life!

Petr Jan Juracka

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