

**RUSSIA: Baikal**  
**Culture, birds & Baikal Seal**  
**August 19 – September 6, 2018**  
**Price: 4.200USD**  
*With Alexander Povarintsev as leader*



**August 19, Day 1: To Irkutsk.** Clients depart from home towards the largest city near Lake Baikal, Irkutsk. Clients need to be in Irkutsk before July 11 – 9 am! If you like to come in earlier please contact the RBT office, this will gladly help with extra hotel arrangements.

NIGHT: Day 1, on aircraft.

**August 20-22, Day 2-4: Irkutsk and Novo Leninsky Marshes**

Everybody arrives on 20 July from the long flight from the US and has the day off to rest before we start the tour. We meet up at 9am on 21<sup>st</sup> July for breakfast in the Marriott hotel lobby where you meet up with your tourleader for this enigmatic trip in magic Siberia. We spend the second day exploring this amazing city, which sometimes is called 'the Paris of Siberia'. Many ancient wooden buildings are preserved and are wonderful decorated with ornate and hand-carved decorations. We will make a guided city excursion visiting the old city center, walk along the Angara River and we will visit among others the Epiphany Cathedral. Our third day in Irkutsk will be a day where we explore the marshes around the city in search of Yellow-breasted Bunting. It is remarkable that still good numbers are found around Irkutsk when keeping in account the global decline of the species. Here we come across Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler and with some luck the dry rattle of the Baillon's Crake is heard. In the evening we return to our superb hotel in the city center of Irkutsk.

NIGHTS: Comfortable tourist hotel, Irkutsk.

**August 23-26 Day 5-8: Baikal cruise**

We leave Irkutsk behind us and drive to Sakhyurta where we will enter our vessel for an enigmatic Baikal cruise. During this Baikal cruise we will visit several places but we start with Olkhon Island. The island represents the geographical, historic and sacred heart of the lake; Olkhon is the biggest island of the lake. It is part of a chain of mountains hiding in the deep waters of the lake. The shoreline is an alternation of cliffs and sandy bays, here forests are skillfully changed into steppes. Burhkan Rock will be a certain visit; local people believe it is the residence of Baikal's God. We continue our journey for Ushkanyi Island where we will enjoy watching Baikal Seals (Nerpa). With a local ranger we get close to the seals who are sunbathing on the shores. By way of the Baikalo-Lensky Nature Reserve, where we have also a small chance on viewings of Baikal Brown Bear. We disembark again at Sakhyurta village and drive back to Irkutsk (250km). En-route we

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visit the ancient carvings in the Anga river valley and we will arrive back in the city in the early evening.

NIGHT: August 23-25 aboard the yacht, Lake Baikal.

NIGHT: August 26 Comfortable tourist hotel, Irkutsk.

**August 27, Day 9: Irkutsk to Arshan (240 miles)**

After breakfast in the hotel we start driving towards the village of Arshan which is renowned for its mineral springs. During the drive we make several stops where Pallas's Warbler and Siberian Chiffchaff will be hopefully added to our list. The Siberian Chipmunk is one of the small mammals living in the Taiga forest; it is the only species of Chipmunk found outside of North America and we have a good chance finding it near Arshan. After a long day driving we arrive in the evening to the small resort village of Arshan. In the afternoon we visit the Khoymorsky Datsan temple, an attractive Buddhist university located in the center of the village. If time permits we walk to the waterfall of Kynryga, a truly delightful landscape awaits us here.

NIGHT: Tuyana hotel, Arshan.

**August 28, Day 10: Tunka Marshes**

Today we visit the Tunka marshes, an area dominated by snow-capped peaks, patches of woodland, grass meadows and several small lakes with reedy margins. Before reaching Tunka, the bushes are worth checking for Siberian Rubythroat, Tree Pipit and Pine Bunting. In the meadows Richard's Pipits are common whilst stands of trees and scrub hold Eurasian Wryneck, Northern and Brown Shrikes and perhaps a Thick-billed Warbler. A walk around Tunka Marshes may reveal Eurasian Bittern, Asiatic White-winged Scoter, Common Pochard, Greater Spotted Eagle, White-winged Tern, Siberian Stonechat and singing Yellow-breasted Buntings. Tunka is also reliable for calling Japanese Quails, although our chances of seeing one are slim. Scarcer birds occurring at Tunka include Black Grouse, White-tailed Eagle, Eastern Buzzard and Little Gull. In the evening we return to Arshan for our last night.

NIGHT: Tuyana hotel, Arshan.

**August 29, Day 11: Arshan Forests**

After spending the previous day in the wetlands today the mighty Russian Taiga forests will receive their fair share of attention. The taiga is home to many interesting species, we will do our best to find gems like Hazel Grouse, Mugimaki Flycatcher, Dark-sided Flycatcher, Siberian Rubythroat and Oriental Cuckoo. In the afternoon we return to our lodge for a siesta followed by an interesting walk through this village famous for its mineral springs. In the evening we return to our guesthouse where we will enjoy a delicious local meal.

NIGHT: Tuyana hotel, Arshan.

**August 30, Day 12: Arshan to Teply Ozero region**

We leave today Arshan behind us and drive to the southern shores of Lake Baikal. We visit the small village of Kudrino where the gardens hold the commoner birds plus Daurian and Common Redstarts, Eurasian Nuthatch and Azure-winged Magpie. An area of forest nearby may be productive for the scarce Siberian Bush Warbler, Olive-backed Pipit, Lanceolated Warbler and Common Rosefinch. Stands of silver birch dominate the area where we should locate the attractive Chestnut Bunting, Oriental Turtle Dove, Eurasian and Baikal Bullfinches, Hawfinch and various Woodpeckers. We expect to arrive in our hotel in the early evening; we will spend two nights on the shores of Lake Baikal.

NIGHT: Krasny Mamay Hotel, Vidrino.

**August 31, Day 13: Birding at Teply Ozero**

The taiga forest has a plethora of interesting species – Oriental Cuckoo, White-backed, Three-toed and Grey-headed Woodpeckers, Red-flanked Bluetail, Olive-backed Pipit, Dark-sided, Asian Brown, Mugimaki and Taiga Flycatchers, Radde's, Arctic, Yellow-browed, Pallas's, and Two-barred Greenish Warblers, Siberian Blue and Swinhoe's Robins, and Black-faced Bunting. Uncommon species that are known to occur in the forests near Teply Ozero include Yellow-browed Bunting, Siberian Jay, White's, Eye-browed and Siberian Thrushes and, above the forest, White-throated Needletails. In the evening we return to the shores of Baikal.

NIGHT: Krasny Mamay Hotel, Vidrino.

**September 01, Day 14: Vidrino to Ulan-Ude**

In the morning we do our final exploration of the Teply Ozero region before we set sails for the Buryat capital of Ulan-Ude. We will arrive in the early evening in our deluxe hotel.

NIGHT: Comfortable tourist hotel, Ulan-Ude.

**September 02, Day 15: Monuments of Ulan-Ude**

The Republic of Buryatia with its capital of Ulan-Ude (1660) is home to a mixture of Russians and indigenous peoples who have rich cultures of their own. During this day we will have an extensive day visiting many of the famous sights of the city. One of the highlights will be the meeting of a Buryat shaman; a shaman interacts with the spirit world and channels these transcendental energies into this world. In the evening we return to our luxurious hotel in the city center.

NIGHT: Comfortable tourist hotel, Ulan-Ude.

**September 03, Day 16: to Beloozersk**

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This morning we travel southwest towards the city of Gusinoozersk where we have a two-night stay. En route we stop at a riverside woodland where should find more Radde's Warblers, Siberian Rubythroat, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker and Long-tailed Rosefinches. Another area of fields with bushes should reveal rarer species in Chestnut-eared Bunting and Brown Shrike. Our journey takes us to a large wetland surrounded by reeds. This is an important area for birds with the open waters attracting ducks including Asiatic White-winged Scoter, Black-necked Grebe and rafts of Common Goldeneye. Raptors use the area on a regular basis and include Eastern Marsh, Hen and possibly Pied Harriers. In the stands of reeds we should hear the eastern race of Water Rail and observe Oriental Reed, and on occasions Paddyfield Warblers. The dry country surrounding the lake attracts Citrine and Eastern Yellow Wagtails, Asian Short-toed and Greater Short-toed Larks. We end the day by birding along the road towards Beloozersk with Eastern Imperial Eagle, Amur Falcon, Isabelline Wheatear and Rock Petronia all being possible.

NIGHT: Guesthouse Beloozersk, Beloozersk.

**September 04, Day 17: Birding the steppes of Beloozersk**

An early departure today as we explore the two lakes near Beloozersk. The open steppe habitat attracts Demoiselle Crane, Cinereous Vulture, Steppe Eagle, Upland Buzzard, Eurasian Hobby, Blyth's Pipit and displaying Eurasian Skylark, Mongolian and Horned Larks. Our main interest is the lakes that host hundreds of Ruddy Shelduck, Whooper Swan, Slavonian and Black-necked Grebes and numerous ducks which may include Long-tailed Duck and Smew. The lakes occasionally hold the very rare Swan Goose. On the muddy margins of the lake we may find migrant shorebirds including Pacific Golden Plover, Red-necked, Long-toed and Temminck's Stints, Eastern Black-tailed Godwit, Marsh Sandpiper, and summer breeders – Pied Avocet and Little Ringed Plover. We also check riverside woodland with cliffs for migrant passerines, Daurian Partridge, Golden Eagle, Lesser Kestrel, Azure Tit, Meadow and Black-faced Buntings.

NIGHT: Guesthouse Beloozersk, Beloozersk.

**September 05, Day 18: Beloozersk to Ulan-Ude**

We do some final birding revisiting the regions of days 16 and 17 before we return to Ulan-Ude where the tour concludes in the evening with a grand final dinner.

NIGHT: Comfortable tourist hotel, Ulan-Ude.

**September 06, Day 19: Ulan-Ude to home.**

After a splendid holiday in Central Siberia it is time to depart home. We say goodbye on the Ulan-Ude Airport from where everybody flies back home.

NIGHT: on Aircraft.

(Please note that we could make extra hotel arrangements for those flying early morning back to Europe)

