

## Language portfolio

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### *Baikal: a Miracle of Nature*

Between mountains and cliffs  
Our Baikal glitters.  
From northern lowlands  
Strong Barguzin is blowing.  
Its waves strike against the banks,  
And around there is the taiga.  
Powerful Khamar-Daban  
Goes through the mist  
Further – white like an aged man,  
Snowy Munku-Sardyk.  
Three hundred thirty three rivers  
Rush down the mountains.  
And right in the middle between cliffs  
There is our Baikal.

Ivan Molchanov-Sibirsky

## *Where is Baikal?*

*Baikal is located in the centre of Asia, in the southern part of Eastern Siberia, between Irkutsk Region and Republic of Buryatia. The lake fills an ancient basin, which was created by a shift of the Earth's crust. Baikal extends from southwest to northeast for a distance of 636 km.*



*Baikal's Birthday*

The age of Lake Baikal is of great interest to scientists, who now believe that Lake is about 20-25 million years old. It is a very ancient lake. Other lakes live for about 15,000 years, before they disappear, but Baikal is still increasing, and the opposite shorelines are moving apart at a rate of 2 cm per year.



The ecologists of Baikal region recently decided that our Lake deserves a birthday: every year since 1999, we celebrate Baikal Day on September 1.

## Why is our Lake called Baikal?



The shoreline of Lake Baikal has been occupied by different peoples down the ages: Turkic tribes, the Mongols, the Evenks, the Buryats and the

Yakuts. And each of them had their own name for the Lake. The origin of the name by which we know the Lake today – “Bajgal” or “Baikal” – is still subject to discussion. Some scholars believe that “Bajgal” is a Buryat word meaning “the natural sea”. Others maintain that this name was first given to the Lake by an ancient Turkic people, the Kuryks.



The deepest lake...



***Baikal*** is the deepest lake in the world (1637 m.). Its depth is explained by its geological origins. There are only two other lakes in the world with depth greater than 1000 m: ***Lake Tanganyika*** in Africa (1470m) and the ***Caspian Sea*** in the south of Russia (1025 m).



Baikal is the second biggest lake in Russia by the volume of water, which it contains: the Caspian Sea is largest by this measure. However, the waters of the Caspian Sea are salty, while Baikal's water is fresh. The waters of Baikal represent 80% of all the fresh water in Russia and 20% of fresh water on the entire planet.

# The island and headlands of Lake Baikal

Baikal has many islands and headlands, but only one large peninsula, known as Svyatoy Nos.

The largest of the islands on the Lake is Olkhon Island, which is located in the central part of the Lake and is considered to be its heart. Olkhon covers an area of 722.4 km<sup>2</sup>, it is 73 km long and 15 km wide. Its coastline is gently sloping on the western side, but tall and steep on the eastern side.



# 336 rivers flow into the Lake

Baikal gathers waters from a huge territory and more than 336 rivers and streams flow into the Lake.

*The Selenga* is the largest tributary of Lake Baikal, and accounts for half of all the river water flowing into the lake. The Selenga is 1024 km long and originates in Mongolia, from where it crosses the border into Russia and flows for 415 km across Buryatia to reach Baikal.

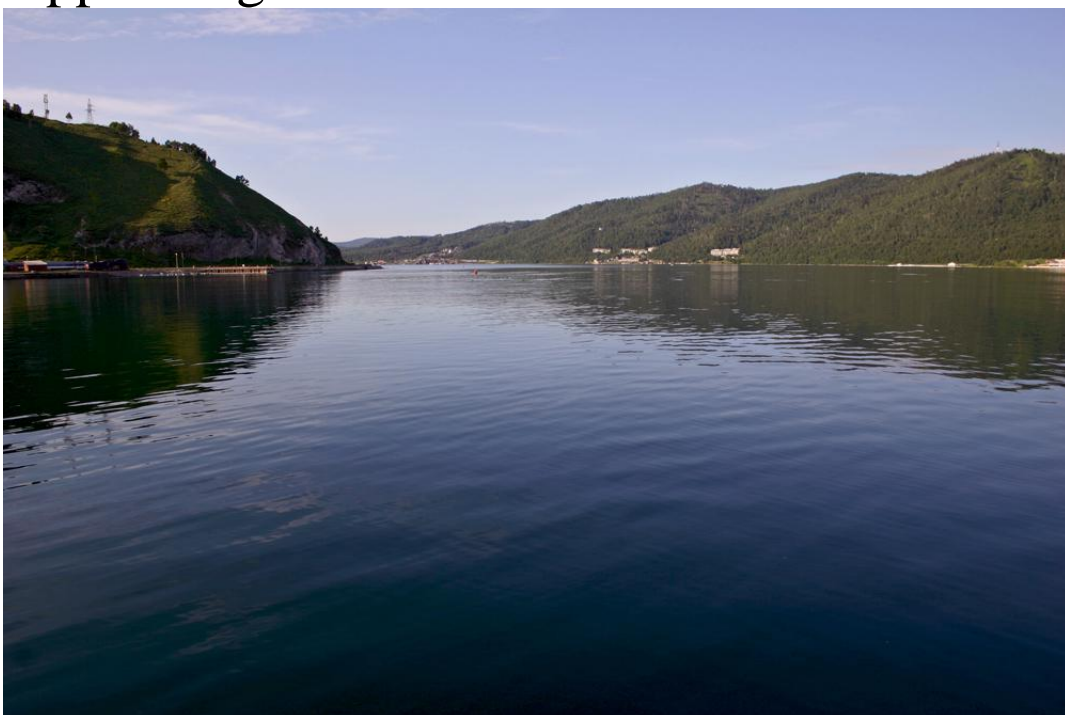




The *Upper Angara* is the second full-flowing tributary of Lake Baikal.

At the beginning of 17<sup>th</sup> century Russian explorers called it simply the Angara. But as there was another Angara (that flows out of Baikal), the river became known as the Upper Angara and this name has been preserved to the present day.

The Upper Angara rises on the slopes of the Vitimsky Plateau and covers a distance of 452 km on its way to the Lake. Its mountain reaches are fast flowing with rapids, but the greater part of the river flows quietly through the marshy Angarsk depression. A variety of fish – taimen, grayling, burbot, ide, pike and perch – are found in its waters and the Arctic cisco uses the river for spawning. The Baikal-Amur railway runs along the banks of the Upper Angara.





# The Angara is the only river flowing out of Baikal

Only one river, the **Angara**, flows out of Baikal. The Angara is 1 km wide and 4-6m deep at its start.



