

## **NAME OF THE PROJECT:**

Siberian/East Russian volunteer programme:

Building the Great Baikal Trail

## **NAME OF ORGANISATION OR INSTITUTION:**

Earth Island Institute  
300 Broadway, Suite 28,  
San Francisco, California, 94133, USA  
Tel.: 1-415-788-3666  
Fax: 1-415-788-7324  
[baikalwatch@earthisland.org](mailto:baikalwatch@earthisland.org)  
<http://www.earthisland.org/>

Desc.: Earth Island and its long-term partners at the Buryat Federation for Ecotourism and Mountaineering are now collaborating to build the Great Baikal Trail (GBT).

They are working closely with the 3 national parks and 3 nature reserves that surround Lake Baikal, as they design and then construct this, the first Russian system of trails. When completed, the GBT will lead fully around this magnificent lake, some 1600 kilometers (1000 miles) in all. Some trails already exist at Baikal, so a number of our projects will require improvement to and maintenance of these trails. Other sections of the Baikal Trail are yet to be built; so teams will be organized to help construct the bridges, switchbacks, signs and other accessories for these new trails. Teams of volunteers will be international, with local Russians mixing with foreign participants. Team size will vary according to project, usually ranging from 8-15, with the majority being local activists and professionals. Project sites vary from year to year as well, including:

1--Zabaikalski National Park, where a 40 mile trail extension will be built over several years from the foot of the Barguzin Mountains, along the shores of Baikal, to the eastern edge of the Chivyrkui Wetlands, and then beyond to the wooden Siberian village of Ust-Barguzin.

2--the Baikalski Nature Reserve, where a 3 mile trail will be improved from the visitor center near the lake's shores up into the old-growth forest to a secluded waterfall in the middle of the reserve.

3--the Baikal Lena Nature Reserve, where shoreline gaps in the trail will be connected, and where a mountain pass trail leading to the headwaters of the famous Lena River needs improvement.

4--the southern shores of Baikal, where the Round Baikal Railroad is now being partially converted to a hiking and biking trail, which will lead through existing (but now virtually abandoned) tunnels, gables, and many cliff-front passages right on the lake's shores.

5--Pribaikalski National Park, from the native Buryat village of Bolshoye Goloustnoye (don't worry about pronouncing this---even the locals call it BG), past a restored Russian orthodox church right on Baikal's shores, south to one of the most popular campgrounds on the hills above the lake.

Spp.:Varies greatly---although no species will be studied directly, some interpretive materials for the Baikal trail will be composed to feature the unique Baikal seal, the bears, sable, elk, and the many fish species at the lake.

Hab.: Lakeshore and beaches (all on the largest lake in the world), steppe-land, mountain forests, riparian watersheds, wetlands, and inland island habitats, all very temperate and mostly dry during the summer.

Location.:the LAKE BAIKAL region of south central Russia, near the Mongolian border.

Travel: Lake Baikal is relatively remote. Flights to Irkutsk and other hub cities (via Moscow or the Russian far east) are recommended for volunteers from abroad. Participants from Europe may choose to take the Trans-Siberian train, which will take some 3 days of travel from Moscow to reach this the heart of Siberia. Entry from China via train is also a possibility for those coming from a southerly direction.

Dur.: no time limit, but most volunteer teams will work for two weeks up to 1 month. Possibilities exist for joining several teams in a row and extending one's volunteer placement.

Per.: summer months, late May-early September.

### **Age: 18 or older**

Qualif.: For this trail building work, it is helpful (but not required) to have previous field work experience (i.e., on other trail-building or related projects). Sound health and a love of exercise are a must, since much time will be spent outdoors, working with heavy tools. Training in the use of these tools will be provided on-site before work commences.

Work: Varies greatly. Some of it is more physical (not only in the building of trails, but in replanting trees, going into the Siberian outback to investigate various sites for trails, etc.) Volunteers with advanced trail-building or volunteer team-building skills could be asked to help us strategise and otherwise help design this system of trails, and in so doing, provide information and recommendations as to how volunteers can most effectively, and enjoyably, spend their time at these sites.

Lang.: Some knowledge of Russian is very helpful, but not required. Likewise for Russian participants, some knowledge of English would be helpful. Volunteer project leaders will be fluent in English and Russian; and some of the Russian volunteers already recruited will be bilingual, and hence will be able to serve as interpreters.

Accom.: Field work will often involve overnights on boats and in tents, where sleeping bags should be provided by the volunteer. Home-stays will also be arranged in towns (when the volunteer is en route to the field---note:

Earth Island and its Russian partners tend to avoid the hotel scene).

Cost: Earth Island Institute and its partners at the Federation will charge no fees for referral or placement on any of these trail-building crews. However, the Federation is a non-profit group, and will depend on international volunteers to pay for their own travel costs to reach the field site at Baikal where they will join their volunteer teams. The Federation, Earth Island, and the local parks and nature reserves, will do all they can to provide food and tents for all volunteers in the field during the summer of 2003. All other costs will be covered by participant.

Travel costs: Flights to Siberia from Europe typically range in cost from US\$500-700, from other parts of Asia and Oceania, costs are in \$500-900 range. From the western hemisphere, flights cost from \$1,000 to \$1,300, depending on the season (mid-summer trips are generally more expensive than late spring flights). On-the-ground costs (food, local transport, etc) before and after the work at the field site will generally amount to @\$10 a day, with an added \$30 for home-stays when not in the field---all the responsibility of each participant, as will be any travel insurance.

L. term: Terms vary according to project. Minimum project length will be 2 weeks, with most project lasting 3 weeks. Opportunities for volunteering for several projects around Baikal, one after the other, will be available for those wishing to stay and contribute for longer periods of time, and in that way see more of Baikal.

Agents: Prospective volunteers can communicate directly with Earth Island's staff (at [baikalwatch@earthisland.org](mailto:baikalwatch@earthisland.org)), or with the Russian partners at the national parks and nature reserves, through their colleagues at the Federation ([baikal@east sib.ru](mailto:baikal@east sib.ru)—note: the Federation staff are fluent in English)

Applic.: No application is required---simple inquiries will suffice to see if Earth Island and its partners can find a placement for you on a team to build the Great Baikal Trail. Membership to Earth Island Institute (US\$ 50) to support local eco-groups and their projects in Eastern Russia will be highly appreciated.

Note: there are also other volunteer and internship opportunities with Siberian environmental groups available, where knowledge of the Russian is a requirement.

For more information on these programs, please write Earth Island Institute.