



ВСЕРОССИЙСКАЯ ОЛИМПИАДА ПО АНГЛИЙСКОМУ ЯЗЫКУ
«Trip to Baikal»

Read the text and choose the correct answer

Our columnist, Sebastian Modak, is visiting each destination on our [52 Places to Go in 2019](#) list. He last wrote about Tunis, where cats ruled the Medina, and [artists and entrepreneurs](#) are creating the future.

1. On a map, Siberia's.....

- a) the
- b) a
- c) an
- d) —

Lake Baikal looks small, but only because it's surrounded by Russia. A slice of blue deep in southern Siberia, the lake is actually a place of superlatives. Baikal.....

2.

- a) large
- b) is the largest
- c) larger
- d) more large

lake by volume in the world, holding around 20 percent of the planet's unfrozen freshwater supply. It's the deepest lake in the world, a rift that plunges down more than 5,000 feet. It's thought to be the world's oldest lake too, formed 25 million years ago from a riverbed torn apart by fractures in the Earth's crust.

With so many accolades to its name, it's a wonder the place isn't completely overrun with tourists in the fall, when the leaves turn and the brutal Siberian winter hasn't settled

3.

- a) in
- b) out
- c) off
- d) on

Then again, if my experience reaching Olkhon, the largest island in the lake, is anything to go by, it can be a hell of a time getting there.

Most visitors come to Olkhon, a mix of craggy mountains, thick boreal forests and steppe that covers an area roughly the size of New York City and is home to only 1,500 people, as part of a weekslong journey

4.

- a) in
- b) by
- c) on
- d) with the help of

the Trans-Siberian Railway, but I didn't have that kind of time.

My trip started with a hot day in Tunis spent in and around the Russian Embassy scrambling to get a journalist visa after baffling bureaucracy had prevented me from securing it earlier. A series of sprints to four A.T.M.s and two internet cafes later, I

5.

- a) had had
- b) have had
- c) would have
- d) had

a visa in hand and, the next day, was on a flight to Moscow. One day of waiting to pick up press credentials slowly turned into three. Flights were canceled and rebooked more than once. I was caught outside during the city's first snow of the season. I got to know Moscow's bar scene very well. Eventually, papers in order, I boarded another flight.

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You don't realize how big Russia is until you fly across it. After six hours, I landed in Irkutsk, a place I am embarrassed to admit I knew only as a strategically important territory in the game of Risk. After a night wandering among the city's wooden houses, I boarded a minivan, which shot through the Siberian countryside at a white-knuckle pace, the driver hitting potholes with the relish of a surfer catching a wave. Five hours later, we reached a small ferry port and crossed the narrow channel from the mainland onto

6.

- a) a
- b) an
- c) ___
- d) the

Olkhon Island.

As soon as you make landfall on Olkhon, roads — at least of the asphalt variety — disappear. Boxy Soviet-era UAZ vans dominate the sparse traffic, with drivers expertly slipping into the grooves dug out by 4x4s past. Every drive on the island is a free chiropractic realignment.



Khuzhir, a small dusty settlement on the island's western coast, is the biggest town on Olkhon Island.



Khuzhir's roads are lined with traditional wooden houses.

Khuzhir, the main settlement on Olkhon, looks like an Old West movie

7.

- a) set
- b) scenery
- c) decoration
- d) script

The main road would be about six lanes wide, if it had any lanes. Instead, it's a wide stretch of dirt, sending up thick clouds every time a van thunders through. Small wooden buildings line either side of it. Cafes serve smoked omul, defying [a moratorium on fishing the threatened whitefish](#) that has long been a staple in this region.

Only relatively recently have Russian industries stopped using the lake as.....

8.

- a) store
- b) a dumping ground
- c) resting place

Olkhon made the 2019 52 Places to Go list as a place of great natural beauty threatened by, among other things, growing tourism, especially from China. [Chinese tourists](#) can get to Irkutsk on a short flight from Beijing. With their numbers rising, locals worry about the environmental impact on their "Sacred Sea," as Lake Baikal is sometimes called.

But most of the tourists stop in the town of Listvyanka on the mainland, an easy hour's drive from Irkutsk. The ferry that takes the short trip to Olkhon can only take a handful of cars.....

9.

- a) at a time
- b) in time
- c) off time
- d) out of time,

a built-in "bottleneck on tourism," as Sergey Yermeev, my host on the island described it.

On a welcome tour of the island, Mr. Yermeev, a contemplative man with an award-worthy beard who studied philosophy at the Sorbonne in Paris, pointed out one of the four Chinese-owned hotels on the island, where Chinese tour guides take groups around the island and bring them back to the in-house Chinese restaurants for dinner.

“We, the residents, are not always getting the benefit of more tourists here,” he said. “It’s something we have to try and change — to encourage tourists to experience the place through its people and leave with a respect for our home and its natural beauty.”

More on traveling to Lake Baikal

[As Chinese Flock to Siberia’s Lake Baikal, Local Russians Growl](#)

[May 2, 2019](#)



[An Ice Marathon Across a Frozen Russian Lake: ‘I Ran Twice as Fast’](#)

[March 24, 2019](#)



Mr. Yermeev and his wife, Anastasia,

10.

- a) move
- b) have moved
- c) had been moving
- d) moved

to Olkhon from Moscow 14 years ago to escape the grind of big city life. Today, they run [Philoxenia](#), named after the Greek word for hospitality. They have opened up two top-floor rooms in their home — mine easily had the best sunset view in town — to paying guests. For years, they have also had a small hostel

11.

- a) across
- b) next to
- c) behind
- d) on

the street, where budget travelers often stay for free and in return help around the property, taking care of the garden and feeding the goats.



Tour groups can be found on the island, especially at Shaman Rock, but logistical challenges...

12.

- a) keep
- b) detain
- c) interdict
- d) trap

many big buses from making landfall.

If you go

- There are two high seasons on Olkhon Island. In the summer, crowds come to hike and swim. At the end of winter, right before the spring thaw begins, they come to see the frozen surface of Lake Baikal, where wind and cold create patterns and sculptures from ice. But for some solitude, I recommend coming in the middle of October, after the crowds vacationing during China's "Golden Week" have left, but when the fall foliage is still impressive and the air is crisp but not yet punishingly cold.
- If you are coming during peak seasons, it's a must book accommodation well in advance. Lodging in general on the island is basic but comfortable — mostly small-scale, family-run guesthouses. But if you're looking for something fancy, you're kind of missing the point.
- A number of companies offer bus service between Irkutsk and Olkhon Island. I went with [Olkhon Express](#), which has two minibus trips a day in either direction, can be booked online and ran on time. Unless you're a seasoned 4x4-driver looking for a shot of adrenaline, avoid

13.

- a) try
- b) to try
- c) having tried
- d) trying

to make the drive yourself.



Baikal is so vast, it is easy to forget that it is a freshwater lake.

One morning, I

14.

- a) set
- b) start
- c) head
- d) get

off with a handful of the current residents — some Russian millennials who have opened a stand-up paddleboard shop, a couple from Belgium making their way to Vietnam overland and two Siberian husky puppies. Piling into a van, we headed toward the island's wild northern reaches, our driver and guide, Igor, expertly navigating his 30-year-old Datsun van through steep dirt inclines and narrow passes framed by giant larch and pine trees. Thick forests gave way to empty steppes. Every once in a while, there was a burst of color — wooden totems wrapped in colorful ribbons. Olkhon is considered

15.

- a) spiritual
- b) blessed
- c) sacred
- d) heavenly

land by the indigenous Buryat people who practice a form of shamanism, which over centuries has blended with Buddhism. I recognized Sanskrit on some of the fluttering ribbons.

When we reached the first of a series of sandy beaches, I

16.

- a) had to
- b) must
- c) could
- d) was able to

remind myself that I was looking out on a lake and not a sea, so vast was the blue horizon. Water lapped at the shoreline, creating icicles on the dilapidated wooden jetty. Small fishing

homesteads stood in clusters 100 feet away from the water, all of them unoccupied. Olkhon was long a place of exile and I learned later that this complex on Peschanka Bay was, during World War II, a gulag, where political dissidents and prisoners of war were forced to work in a commercial fishing plant.



Wild horses galloped into a forest of larch trees, which turn bright yellow in autumn.

We stopped again at another bay, a little farther north. This time we

17.

- a) Hadn't been
- b) wasn't
- c) weren't
- d) won't be

the only people around: Two men in heavy fleeces and camo pants walked by our group holding fishing rods and then disappeared behind a rocky outcropping at the end of the beach. I wandered away from the group and slowly approached a herd of wild horses. The all-encompassing quiet was interrupted by the muffled thuds of the horses' hooves against the frozen scrubland, sounding like drumsticks against a pillow. The herd disappeared behind a thick wall of larch trees that glowed a bright autumn yellow. I returned to the group in time for lunch — fish soup that I scarfed down in between cupping the warm bowl with my cold hands that had gone numb inside my gloves.

We reached Mys Khoboy,

18.

- a) the
- b) a
- c) an
- d) _

northern tip of the island, just as the sun was beginning to set. Trees and piles of stones were wrapped in the now familiar ribbons of the Buryat faith, with semiprecious stones and coins strewn on the ground in front of them as offerings. As the sun descended toward the outline of land across the water, a band of fuzzy pink light wrapped across the rest of the sky. I barely noticed how cold it was becoming and I hardly blinked, afraid I'd miss something. There are few places left where the power of nature — and nature alone — is left to

19.

- a) it
- b) his
- c) her
- d) its own devices.

This is surely one of them.



The view from Philoxenia, a family-run guesthouse on Khuzhir's outer edge.

On my last day on the island, Mr. Yeremeev drove me.....

20.

- a) through
- b) in
- c) into
- d) on

a dense larch forest and up a steep hill to a lookout point over the western side of the island for the start of a walk. He pointed at Khuzhir, a faint blur far away, waved goodbye and drove home.

I took my time, stopping to put my camera down and soak in the expanse before me and the silence that surrounded me. I walked down across open steppe and through the Buryat village up the road from Khuzhir, where kids were racing on bicycles, sending tufts of dust into the air. I felt that urge, familiar to all solo travelers, to have someone to share this moment with — a witness who could assure me that this was all real and not, as the ethereal nature of the late afternoon light suggested, a dream. The universe responded.

Dogs are everywhere on Olkhon: Owners let them.....

21.

- a) roaming
- b) to roam
- c) roam

free, trusting they will find their way home at the end of the day. On hour two of my walk, one took a particular interest in me. A mutt, whose black-and-tan face signaled some German shepherd DNA, started following me as I made my way along the coast, cautiously keeping his distance. Then he came closer, and nuzzled my leg. For the rest of the afternoon, my new friend never strayed more than 20 feet away.

Ribbon-covered totems mark the entrance to



Shaman Rock.



Shaman Rock is considered one of the most sacred places in Lake Baikal.

By sunset, we

22.

- a) were making
- b) had made
- c) made
- d) had been made

it back to Khuzhir and continued farther north to Cape Burkhan, better known as Shaman Rock, a two-part stone formation that juts out into the lake. It's considered to be the most sacred spot on a sacred island: The faithful believe that a cave in the rocks was home to the deity who rules over Lake Baikal. When my canine companion and I arrived, a group of tourists.....

23.

- a) were taking
- b) took
- c) had been taking
- d) had taken

selfies in front of the sunset, while a woman in a thick coat prayed, leaning her head against one of the totems that stand at the base of the rock. I sat down on the cold grass to take in the view and the dog came and lay down right in front of me, watching the sunset too. After the sun dropped, the temperature plummeted well below freezing and I was forced to go into a cafe

24.

- a) to
- b) on
- c) in
- d) for

dinner. The dog watched me from the window, sitting and waiting, until two other dogs came and chased him off the porch. I rushed out the door after him, but he was nowhere to be seen.



Wandering dog or spirit guardian? Hard to tell.



Image

A sculpture by Dashi Namdakov sits on an empty hill overlooking the lake.

That night, I had a parting conversation with Mr. Yermeev. He takes care of the only church on the island, which is right across a white picket fence from his house. He opens it for services in the morning and rings the bells in intricate rhythms every Sunday. I was curious if he, like the Buryat people who settled down here long before him, felt a spiritual connection to the island, and whether visitors drawn by its nature shared in that feeling.

“Spirituality can mean so many things and it depends.....

25.

- a) of
- b) in
- c) on
- d) at

the spirit that animates you in the first place,” he said. “If you come here and it helps your life make more sense and you can see new horizons, then yes, it’s spiritual. If you find that by being in nature you’re able to better understand some of your problems, then yes, it is spiritual, too.”