

VIII Baikal Ice Marathon "for the preservation of clean water"



www.baikal-marathon.org
www.absolute-siberia.com

March 3, 2012, Listvyanka - Pereemnaya

Organizer: "Absolute Siberia" Events and Expeditions Bureau

Safety: Emergency and Rescue Service of the Irkutsk region

General Partner of VIII-th Baikal Ice Marathon - «VIP Travel» - www.viptravel.ru



The 8th Baikal Ice Marathon "for the preservation of clean water" has been completed.

There are always new experiences but only Lake Baikal remains the same, the same as millions of years ago, a treasure on this planet with pure oxygen saturated water and elements from the universe. An ancient and great living organism, which continues to grow and breathe – as life does...

While we are familiar with the ice and use the best technology available to predict the conditions for the Baikal Ice Marathon (BIM), the phenomenal breathing of the Lake between the east and west banks always keeps us in suspense. We are not the only ones, as some of the registered runners from other countries were trying to observe and track the ice situation watching the on-line web-camera placed in Listvyanka. There may have been some cause for alarm that Lake Baikal does not freeze and the marathon may not take place. Or perhaps the runners will be forced to flee across the ice or along the coast or even by a different path.

Apart from the attraction of the Lake itself, runners come from all over the world for the unique opportunity to run on the ice between the two banks. After all, it is the traditional route of our ice marathon – from one bank to another, easily distinguishable on any school globe, that enables people to experience the wonder of Lake Baikal and feel energised by her beauty. So someone running a distance between the opposite shores in polite tribute, giving to



Lake Baikal one's mental and physical energy, receives in return a unique gift of Baikal's power - internal wisdom.



Like conditions on the whole planet this year, Lake Baikal was unusual, demonstrating evidence of its active life force. It seemed to us that this winter Baikal was in a way breathing differently, at least compared to what we've already observed throughout the 8 year history of the Baikal Ice Marathon. As always, fractures and breaks in the ice were opening up one night to close up the next morning but then they would appear in some places where one would not expect. The usual ice pressure ridges on most parts of Baikal this winter seemed to be at nearly the same place as the traverse of the future marathon ice course. However, and probably, due to a later than usual freezing over of Lake Baikal, fractures in compact pack ice appeared more often this year. Those ones we encountered during our ice scouting trips, that as a rule precede the course marking, were not that long (150-300 metres) but were somehow always on the move – wandering around the entire area and wider. As for the real black ice – there were only two small sections of it where the ice surface was not covered at all by a layer of snow, the latter in some places was over two feet thick and hiding the above mentioned new ice fractures and urging us to be more careful when checking the way again after it would have already been marked.



On February 17, with ice captain Alexei Ilyin, we made the crossing of the route to the eastern shore, where from Listvyanka this year, no one has crossed, even by snowmobile. As always, we "sprinkled" as a sign of respect to Lake Baikal, sincerely asking for a good location for us and it eventuated that we saw a new "perspective" for the forthcoming tracks. We passed a crack in the ice pressure ridge at around 16.6km, which had expanded to nearly twice the distance on our way back and a second "moving" crack a couple of kilometers farther. And then we approached a wide and long field of brash ice which represented a mixture of small cakes and chunks, like sticks and golf balls - irregularly shaped elements combined and refrozen on the compact ice surface (locally called "kolobovnik"). That brash ice field located 9 km from the eastern shore was over 4 km wide and 1 km long. Certainly, besides fractures, this brash ice presented a problem and danger for runners that we had to tackle...and there was no chance for us to avoid it since we had to get those 42 km and nearly 200 m in order to qualify for the traditional marathon course. We also had to take into account other minor obstacles.



Constant monitoring of the ice surface of Lake Baikal this year required us to change the course a few times. Finally, it became clear that most 4-WD vehicles (vans) would most likely not manage to drive further than the middle of Lake Baikal on March 3. Therefore, long delays both with the marathon starting time and further transfers of the runners could be caused if the start was from the eastern shore.



After repeated passes of the traverse, it was decided to make the start at Listvyanka, as we believed that the minivans would not be able to reach the 30km mark. And with such a number of participants (for the first time more than 100 people-140 registered), and an insufficient number of all terrain vehicles-amphibians, the start would be very much delayed if it was from the eastern shore. However, even if starting from Listvyanka the problem of transporting participants remaining on the ice was significant.

As a result, we were facing the phenomena of the ice pressure ridges, the moving cracks that one night come together freezing while moving apart the next night at a new spot and diverging to one and a half metres, and then there were new problems. On March 2 at 16:25 – after our route was set, a large wedge of ice broke the shore, 200 meters from the start, so we had re-mark the course and slightly change the marathon start place. Then it would start snowing, making work difficult, and the problem remained with the “kolobovnik” brash ice field. It was clear that we had to build a safe route for minivans to the middle, at least.



There were almost 50 half marathon runners pre-registered. Anticipating their possible finishing times and planning approximate intervals, even knowing the previous results of some of these participants, was impossible in the conditions on the Baikal Ice. Weather in the middle of the lake could be much more windy and colder than near the shores. The same difficulty was with the full marathon, so the two finishing points had to be equipped for runners to take refuge in the warmth, because of the possibility of the local piercing “Hius” wind. However, there was a lack of the “Hivus” hovercrafts, although the first time during the marathon history we hired all 7 hovercrafts available in the area including a large all-terrain vehicle “TREKOL”.

The trail was prepared as best as possible for the vans to commute. To ensure the marathon runners did not get injured on the "kolobovnik" brash ice we had to remove, or at least neutralise, the kolobovnik and constantly monitor the state of the ice. It was challenging, but was resolved when there are combined resources. And it just so happened that it worked. Thanks to the newfound financial capacity of the 8th BIM, we had a new technical assistance organiser of the course.



And of course, thanks to Lake Baikal who did us a great favour again this year, as well as thanks to additional funding made available by "VIP-travel" company from Moscow – the partner of the Baikal Ice Marathon and to the guys from the "First Expedition" Ltd. Co. who, the night before the marathon, went out on to the ice again and finally managed to clear the course of obstacles, the 8th edition of Baikal Ice Marathon – as "Clean Waters Conservation Run"- was a success. Likewise, thanks to the runners themselves who with reverence have related to Baikal before the start, and sprinkled the "white meal" – milk, to pacify the spirits of the Great Baikal. Having made such a ritual with clear minds we were all granted a good blessing for the run. As such, the previously forecast strong south-eastern wind and local "hius" blew at nearly no speed and there was enough sunshine for all to enjoy the run and view of the gorgeous Baikal landscapes enchanted in ice and snow.



First time partner of the Baikal Ice Marathon, well known travel agency in Moscow «VIP Travel» (www.viptravel.ru) readily covered extra costs associated with preparing and conducting our marathon. For the first time we established a "Cup of BIM Partner" which was then taken to Moscow and with gratitude, on behalf of Baikal Ice Marathon, presented to the general Director of "VIP Travel" Irina Polyakova. (We would very much like Irina to visit Baikal in the winter as she planned to attend our marathon of "pure water" but unfortunately, at the last moment was unable to come. We look forward to her visit). VIP Travel's sponsorship allowed us to cover additional and significant costs.

Experienced partner company, «First Expedition», was responsible for the construction of the marathon route, employing professional geologists, seismologists and blasters. We advised "First Expedition" very carefully about the requirements of the BIM and our intimate knowledge of Baikal has helped. Heating for the house in the middle of the lake was not forgotten and firewood was collected for this purpose. On the night before the start the Komatsu was used to clear the ice track which almost completely removed the kolobovnik brash ice.

Though during the pre-race briefing (when I was not sure that we would manage to remove that obstacle before the upcoming morning) I intentionally warned the marathon participants about the dangers of this section of ice and fortunately the route turned out almost perfectly, as evidenced by the reviews we received and the new best time for the BIM by marathon runner Sergei Kalashnikov from Irkutsk--2:55:51. We congratulate him once again for his record achievement! Nobody in the world has run a faster marathon on ice! Sergei, a 25 year old scientist who studies the sun later shared his impressions: "This is my fourth time taking part in the ice marathon and it would seem I have some experience. However, the Baikal is diverse and therefore each of the four races has been in their own way, unique. Today was perfect



sunny weather, no wind and a bit of snow on the track. And most importantly - it lasted until the finish line. I will never forget my first race in 2009 when suddenly in the middle of Lake Baikal the sky became overcast and it started to blizzard. But in less than half an hour there was sunshine again. It is a great feeling when you beat a previous time and I realised after the 10km mark that I might be able to make a record time. Running further my confidence grew. In the first half I managed to keep the pace from the start and in the second half, as expected, the pace decreased. The snow on the track was a little bit thick and I began to feel fatigued from the first half of the race. Nevertheless, I managed to endure until the finish line, in the joyful Siberian spring sunshine. Finally, I want to say thank you to all participants and competitors and express gratitude and appreciation to the organisers of the Baikal Ice Marathon."



For the first time this year the male and female winners of our marathon, in addition to receiving a winner's trophy, medal and certificate, were awarded a valuable prize, very useful for athletes, a Compex Sport muscle stimulation unit. They were provided by Moscow company «Eaglesportsmed» (www.eaglesportsmed.ru) – the first company in Russia to distribute a complete range of quality medical sports goods. CEO Jeffrey M. Ramsay presented the Compex units to the winners and also successfully completed the marathon himself (Race number 122). After the ceremony, Jeffrey told prize-winners about the benefits of using the Compex device, for warm-up, sport recovery, cross-training, pain relief, rehabilitation and general physical preparation.



The 8th BIM had its oddities, one of which delayed the transfer of marathon finishers from the eastern shore of Lake Baikal to the middle. It was planned that as the marathon runners finished up to 12 people would be transported in the "Khivus" hovercraft or "TREKOL" ATV to the 21km point. From there, transport to Listvyanka would be carried out in "Istana" vans (up to 14 people). The main objective was not to leave empty seats in the vehicles so as not to delay the transfer of runners to the shore in Listvyanka. The first finishers had dressed, had a cup of tea and dined on Siberian pelmeni (meat dumplings) and were directed to the specified transport. Runners were warned in advance about the need to adhere strictly to the officials' request and the penalty for not adhering to this timely planning would be disqualification. However, some runners came in company teams or club teams like the Chinese from Hong Kong. There was a problem with those who had already finished long before their friends and who wanted to wait until the last one finished to cheer them over the finish line and congratulate or hug them. That's where the "cat and mouse game" began as I saw an empty "Khivus" coming from the middle to the shore. It was a challenge to calculate how many finishers would arrive in different intervals with the objective of filling each vehicle with 10 -11 runners, sending it to the middle and filling the next one. We went inside the tent, which had 20 people, and strongly welcomed the finishers to recover with food and drink and then proceed to the vehicles. With only three proceeding readily, and then two more, after convincing or rather demanding – I went outside and saw that no





one else was finishing the race at that time.

Again I went into the tent and realised there were 5 or 6 people beginning to sabotage the plan. I saw who had dumplings in their saucers, who were still in wet clothes and who was already dressed. I observed two or three Japanese not in the tent who were dry and well fed and were not heading for the "Khivus". I went out around the corner of the tent and at a portable toilet saw the "ears of the rabbit" and a few more people in sports caps flash over to the tent! Then in this "outhouse ambush" the Japanese were replaced by a friendly team of wise Chinese. Basically, hiding like children so they could wait for their friends to finish. No one this time was disqualified, but this situation needs to be resolved for the future and we will most likely make a certain point of it in the rules.

We had a little hitch with not enough boiling water for tea at the drink stations on the morning before the race started. Although we coordinated everything with the restaurant kitchen the night before to supply almost 150 litres of boiling water, the kitchen made a mistake as, in the morning for an early breakfast, guests consumed more coffee and tea than usual (in a hotel which was fully booked). So a single van was sent out on the ice of Lake Baikal from the restaurant to the drink stations and back again to supply hot water, but nobody noticed and there was enough tea for all. The volunteers then managed to supply the boiling water from the small house in the middle, where there was a stove and firewood. They drilled a hole in the ice nearby, drew the water and put the pot on the stove so that the house then became warmer, making the heating more efficient.



At the finish of the marathon, for the first time at BIM, we used Army tents (6 to 12 m), with a gas oven and grill nearby. Lighting inside was provided and heat from "guns". Initially, we assumed that there may be a slight delay to the transfer of finishers, taking into account a possible factor of the south-east wind halfway to the finish line or the local "hius"-wind off the eastern coast, as well as athletes needing to change clothes and perspiring from the sweat and energy of racing on Lake Baikal. We decided to regale the Baikal marathoners and provide homely Pereemnaya dumplings at the finish. Employees of the Baikal Biosphere Reserve successfully coped with the task of cooking dumplings, and distributing them in environmentally friendly and attractive dishes produced by «Huhtamaki» (www.huhtamaki.ru - partner of BIM in 2011), which we retained for the purposes of this marathon. This year's Baikal Biosphere Reserve (<http://zapovednik.e-baikal.ru>) provided the BIM disposal of its two





new hovercraft "Khivus" and at a price much lower than commercial. We thank them for their support. The Baikal Biosphere Reserve seems to be the only host so far, on the "Buryat" bank of the Lake, to volunteer assisting us, apart from two local residents who support us - the well known Dennis from Pereemnaya and his grandmother, who despite her ailment was present to watch over this familiar event.

With our traditional desire to give out all awards at the presentation ceremony and now with the diploma certificates, we missed in the summing up of the results, a new women's marathon record which was set on March 3.

We apologise to Maybritt Elisabet Prah from Australia (Race number 17) and have sent her an additional certificate indicating that she showed the best time for women in the entire eight-year history of the Baikal Ice Marathon - 3:50:11 (actually, Maybritt's result turns out to be also a women's world record in marathon running on ice). On her return home to Sydney Maybritt wrote us the following:

"As an Australian, the attraction was intense to run the Baikal Ice Marathon because in our country there is nothing to compare to the vast white wilderness and frozen beauty of Lake Baikal in Siberia.



On the sunny and frosty morning of the 2012 event it was a privilege to stand with competitors from all over the world to bless this ancient and sacred lake. It is tradition to pacify the lake god Burkhan and hope for a safe passage across the lake. This year the offering was with milk sprinkled north, south, east and west. It was an honour, not only to bless the lake but to experience the 42.2km journey on foot across its frozen water. The pristine snow, pure air, stunning landscape and comfort of knowing that friendly faces welcomed us at each of the drink stations served to enhance this amazing experience. Not far from the finish line a large bird flew directly towards me and when it was overhead it greeted me with a kind and welcome call, as if to say "you are nearly there" - I will never forget it. Burkhan was kind to us that day as the predicted winds did not arrive and we were treated to a perfect sunny day. A huge thank you to everyone involved in the organisation of this magnificent and unique event. It was an absolute joy and I look forward to returning to Lake Baikal soon."



It is not the first time our Japanese friends have come to us. Junya Nakadate and Hiroki Minagawa have come twice now and brought with them delicate but, as it turned out, incredibly hardy, Japanese girls - Ryuko Haraoka, Mishiko Tsuchiya and Aya Toyoda (the last successfully completing the full marathon). "Sun bunny" (Junya Nakadate ran in a funny rabbit-ears hat) and generally amused himself and others. Local spectators enthusiastically welcome these lovely young Japanese, taking turns wearing Junya's funny hat and the flag of the Rising Sun over the

shoulders when he repeated crossing the finish line.

Higuchi Yasuaki came a third time and this time not only with his wife and oldest son but in an expanded format. He was accompanied by another - his still-infant son. For the past two years Yasu-san participated in the half marathon and this time he decided on the Ice Marathon. He completed it successfully and at the finish looked fresh. Yasu-san first wrote about their experience and about what we are asking all participants:

"I am a Japanese man who has lived in Moscow for three years as an expatriate of a Japanese medical device and equipment company.

It was a summer in 2008 when my friend told me about winter Baikal. He told me how the lake Baikal is very beautiful in winter time. I was dreaming to visit the lake Baikal from when I was a student, 15 years ago. Then I searched on internet to find information about winter Baikal and I found The Baikal International Ice Marathon. This was my first contact with the world's most beautiful marathon event.

In 2010, I tried half marathon because I was not a serious runner. I spent a lot of time to finish but I enjoyed a lot and I was so impressed by beauty of Baikal's nature and its power. Therefore, I felt in my bones that I, as a living thing, was lived by this lake.

After my first run on the lake Baikal, I decided to come back again and I already ran



three times. This year was my first try to run a full marathon which I wish to do for a long time. I trained myself a lot and participated in several marathons in 2011. Every run were for the Baikal. Finally, my dream comes true. I ran from a shore to the opposite shore with enjoying the time talking with the great nature of Baikal.

The cleanest water, the most beautiful ice, the freshest water and the kindest people are the treasure of Russia. I wish I can come back to this hallowed lake every year. Thank you, Baikal!! "

Yasu-san, by the common decision of the jury, was awarded with traditional cup of the Baikal Ice Marathon – "For Strong Will".



We feel we need also to tell to the rest of the world a few words about "Siberian Forrest Gump" - Vassilyi Gorbunov who, for the second time, took part in the Baikal Ice Marathon. Vassilyi is from a small village of Svetly in Sakha republic (where the temperatures of 55 Celsius below zero are common in winter). He is an ultra-ultra-runner, unsurpassed so far. In 2009 he completed his solo-ultra from Vladivostok to Yakutsk (3157 km), in 2010 a fantastic solo ultra from Moscow via Novosibirsk to Yakutsk (7900 km) every day covering from 60 to 80 km. He ran around Sakha Republic from village to village via the Pole of Cold. He runs every day actually. Before 2011 he never took part in any marathon competitions, actually he just never competed with anyone, but registered for the full Baikal Ice marathon last year in 2011. It took him a long time to

come to Irkutsk, taking three flights before arriving on the eve of the BIM. He was exhausted, but we did not know about that. He came to the briefing of the 7th BIM and the next day started running the marathon across Lake Baikal with more than 80 other runners. Because of his ambitions, and lack of competition experience, he made it to the middle of the race, running close to the tough competitors who were much younger than his children (he has six sons and one daughter, hence his wife is 17 years younger than him). When he was at the middle, it was noticed he didn't feel well and was picked up on the hovercraft, provided medical first aid but it was not enough because Vassilyi had suffered a serious "stroke" in his brain. So an ambulance took Vassilyi to the clinic in Irkutsk. On the second day when we were admitted to see him, he firmly said that in a couple of days he wants to fly home so as not to miss one of his village-to-village seasonal runs. Doctors strongly advised him against this, that he needed rehabilitation and up-to-date medical treatment, he just can't fly. After all, he stayed in the Irkutsk clinic for over two weeks. In less than a year Vassilyi called us from his "permafrost village" and told us that he



wanted to run the full Baikal marathon. We remembered what the doctor said last year: "Vassilyi, you should not run for 2-3 years more than a kilometer a day – and it should not be running, but slow jogging". So, we refused to accept him in spite of his frequent calls but he simply showed up the day before the 8th BIM. The Director of the race was firm not to accept him even though Vassilyi had a doctor's certificate claiming he was in good health to run over 40 km. We said "Hey, Vassilyi, in your small village a single doctor is likely to be your relative, he can issue any paper for a dear champion or friend." It turned out that we finally accepted him after learning that this time his sons collected the funds to sponsor his trip (last year he had a commercial sponsor) and he also said that the whole year he dreamed to return to the ice course of Baikal. We told him "OK, Vassilyi, you're accepted, but for a half marathon distance only, and we will watch you during the run, and take you off any minute we think it should be done. Also you must promise that you won't be trying to outrun the youngsters". Vassilyi made it, and was really happy. Actually, Vassilyi - a former Yakut national wrestler- started running only 6 years ago after a heavy injury, in spite of a verdict from doctors of his disability. Since that time, if one counts the total distance that Vassilyi has covered while running – it will turn out that he has already run twice around the globe.



Again, the Baikal Ice Marathon was well represented by Spain, their triumph at the 7th Baikal was undisputed (2nd, 3rd and 4th finishers were Spanish). Among the Spanish runners this year was Ignacio Prat - our colleague from Barcelona. He owns and operates a travel company E&TB, which specialises in organising corporate meetings, conferences and events throughout Spain. With a degree in economics and a master's degree in law, Ignacio founded his company when he was 30 years old. For many years he has been engaged in incentive programs, planning corporate meetings, conferences and events.

Ignacio is a healthy man who spends his spare time with his family and participating in sport. Running the Baikal marathon is not enough - only last year he took part in the extreme race Costa Brava in Mallorca and in October ran a marathon in Greenland, "Polar Circle". In addition, Ignacio is an avid fan and active member of the football club "Barcelona".

So, long before the start of Baikal, Ignacio asked us to arrange a meeting with the local football club. Such a meeting was organised on March 3 during the presentation ceremony for the marathoners and half marathoners. When the time



came for Ignacio to receive his medal and diploma, Artem Kushkin, the General Manager of the Irkutsk football club "Radian-Baikal", handed Ignacio souvenirs from the club and a football jersey autographed by all the players. In return, Ignacio gave Artem a jersey autographed by the players of the famous Spanish club "FC Barcelona". Ignacio loves unusual events. When he was in Listvyanka, he learned about our plan to organise an ultra-marathon in 2013 "Pole Lake" under the slogan "Great Water Race." Less than 10 days after the marathon he wrote to us: "Please, as soon as possible inform me about the new ultra-marathon on Lake Baikal. After the experience of participating in your recent marathon, I want to participate in the first Ultra-race, and definitely will come. So please keep for me race number "1". Again, thank you for the excellent organisation of the Baikal Ice Marathon, which for me was the best! "



First, we were very happy to secure, Maria Shalneva, highly accomplished journalist and photographer from Moscow and author of wonderful website <http://www.fun-run.ru> , which has already posted an excellent gallery of photographs taken tirelessly by talented Maria. After the marathon we decided to assign Maria as our only official press Secretary of the Baikal Ice Marathon, throughout central Russia.

And for the second time we were pleased to be joined by our friend, Vladimir Berezhnikh, Chief Editor of "The Open World-Asia" magazine "Russia and Mongolia", "Russia and

China," as well as author and presenter of the best electronic edition of the Baikal region (<http://www.pribaikal.ru>) He returns soon from his trip, and then we can place his photos in the gallery of the current BIM.

It is a pity that due to the illness of his mother, Gennady Vasiukevich from ancient Russian city of Tver could not come, the most experienced "non-resident" Russian in the marathon at BIM and a great storyteller, whose incidental narrative about the sights of Lake Baikal are recognised by us as professional tour operators and are very interesting and useful for the curious tourists travelling to our region. (Gennady – we wish you and your family all the best!).

We also missed this year the most extraordinary German(at least in our view) - Stefan Shlett, (who has participated in the BIM four times), and who likes to establish extraordinary records all over the world, is the first and so far the only one to complete the Baikal Ice Triathlon (he rode a bicycle to the eastern shore of Lake Baikal to join the full marathon runners and after completing the Baikal Ice Marathon, swam in the lake).



It was less than a week when we began to receive feedback from the participants of the 8th Baikal Ice Marathon and so far only from foreigners (if not to count the full marathon winner Sergei Kalashnikov). Of course, it's nice to know about good impressions. There were some stories from the participants about themselves and some private revelations. Of course, this is thanks to Lake Baikal and only very partially, to us.

David Bryan, a veteran runner from Portsmouth, United States (Race number 26, 48 years):



" It is with great sincerity that I share my compliments with you regarding a wonderful experience in your country in association with running the VIII Lake Baikal International Ice Marathon. The event was masterfully organized to the extent I will say that the organization could only be topped by the sheer beauty and majesty of the setting. Without a doubt, Lake Baikal is a true wonder of the world, and I feel very fortunate to have traversed its ice-covered surface. I can only imagine how beautiful the Lake is when it is not frozen. The race was fair- yet extremely challenging. It is a race I take immense pride in completing as I move toward running a marathon on every continent. I can imagine no experience more unique on the Asian continent. Staff members were extremely professional. The Russian people were wonderfully hospitable during my entire stay, and I will always treasure the memories of my visit to Listvyanka, Siberia. Thank you for organizing a great event!"

Lora Nicolai, Bulgarian from Belgium, registered for the half marathon and successfully completed the full marathon distance of the BIM. In her blog after returning home, she wrote:

"There are a few adventures that I have undertaken, that really stayed on my mind for a long time. Of course I remember them all, but they tend to merge and blend and I lose some of the details. Sometimes it's just the beautiful scenery you find yourself in. Sometimes it's the outstanding physical or aesthetically pleasurable experience. Sometimes the good company or the inspiring people I met, or the different and admirable culture, or the unusual circumstances. And sometimes it's all of the above. And that's how it was: the Baikal Ice Marathon. "



It is very significant and important to us to know that BIM continues to contribute to good causes such as environmental and charity programs. Specifically, among the participants of the 8th BIM was a group of British diplomats and activists from the ecological movement "Green Britain". They timed our current marathon with a visit to the Baikal Museum, an active scientific centre, which aims to educate students and raise awareness of the problems of global climate change and sustainable energy. How does an event such as our BIM, bring together unique people from all over the world and help those in need? Read on...

Competing in the marathon and running for the dignity of the elderly, Engineer, Dr Philip Blezdel is an optimist by nature and reluctant runner. Not that he doesn't like running, he just prefers not to run. Racing on Lake Baikal became his most difficult physical test. Before leaving for Lake Baikal, he hoped to return home safe and unharmed, with the intention of hanging up his running shoes for a break. To prepare properly for the race he was assisted by Trevor Rackley, who has worked for 15 years as a fitness coach. He not only coached Philip, but ran along with him during the Baikal Ice Marathon, one of the 10 the most "cool" marathon races on the planet. They finished together and that evening, Philip wrote in his blog:

"3rd March 2012 Trevor and I finished the Baikal Ice Marathon in Siberia. We crossed the finish line in 5 hours and 3 minutes, running on one of the most unique landscapes on the planet. Conditions on the day of the race were exceptional - Heaven gave us blue sky and lots

of sun. In such conditions, a new world record was set in marathon running on the ice! Our race did not beat any records, but we succeeded in finishing it on the beautiful frozen scenic trail which was for us a huge achievement".



It was Philip's first marathon (right). In addition to training under the experienced guidance of Trevor (left), the effort and courage it took to run the Baikol Marathon strengthened Philip's belief in the need for charity. For nine months leading up to the start of the 8th BIM Philip, through his blog, raised funds for terminally ill elderly people for the British charity Ian Rennie "Hospice at Home", UK (<http://www.irhh.org>). This unusual hospice operates in the county of Buckinghamshire and through donations, provides the choice for terminally ill elderly people to receive

treatment in the comfort and security of their own home. Together with Trevor, Philip was able to raise enough money to cover all costs for 6 weeks around the clock supervision and care for one patient.

Chris Heaton, Chief Financial Officer of Charterfields Ltd Britain is also involved in charity events. With his run in the Baikol Ice Marathon this year he planned to raise 2000 pounds and instead collected 3247 pounds for the charity Target Ovarian Cancer. (The charity provides assistance to women suffering from ovarian cancer). Below are his messages left on his personal blog for hundreds of ordinary people who have made donations to the charity through his run.

We are pleased to publish below what we'd rather call as The Baikol Marathon Diary of Chris Heaton (taken from his blog):



Hello from Lake Baikol!

... Arrived at Irkutsk 7.45 am Friday - 9 hours ahead of UK. Still dark and freeze the breath in your lungs cold at -25. Lisa (our organiser) told me the winter had been most odd. Warm for Siberia in February, but all of a sudden colder now. Drove in minibus for 1 hour on a very undulating highway with nothing but forest on either side - and then we saw the lake on a glorious sunny day - a flat expanse of ice and snow just going on for ever in all directions. With the odd solitary person walking on it for no apparent purpose. Listvyanka is a colourful small town - everything a bit dilapidated rather like somewhere like Fleetwood. Yes it feels as though you're on the coast in a traditional small english resort that's seen better days. And to remedy it they've painted everything in bright colours. Going to have a snooze now and then will wander out and test the spikes a bit later on. Apparently 80 in the marathon and 50 in the half - a lot more in the half than ever before. Seems a long way to come to stop in the middle of a lake only half way across! I don't think I'll be able to load any photos, but hopeful I might get some video up after the race. Hope to blog again tomorrow.

Race Number 1 - No pressure!

Yes - that's right. I'm number 1!! Just come back from the pre race briefing. We're running it the other way apparently due to Baikal "breathing". That means cracking - in the wrong place. Although it might heal up tonight apparently. Also a few problems with "pancake" ice. Think they got the translation wrong - we gather it's where the surface freezes into tiny spikes and golf ball like lumps. Very bad for the feet and dangerous to run on. So these will now be at the end - when we are tired! I suppose they didn't want to put people off in the first few ks. They've also not really got the end sorted - we'll get a lift back sometime, meanwhile there's a tent with a fire in it - and we may have to stop halfway in a log cabin for the second leg of the journey back!

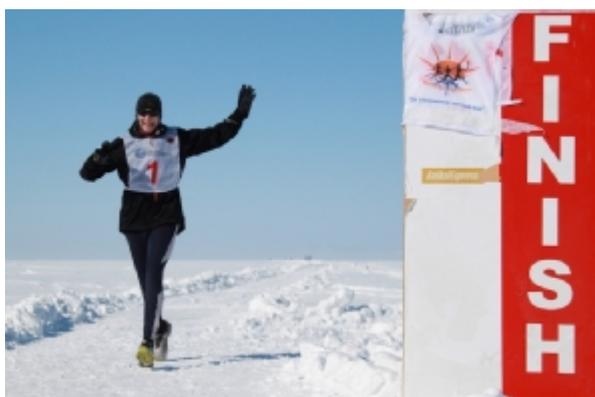


Final Adjustments

Quick update before we start. Couple of last minute kit adjustments - took laces out of ordinary trainers and swapped them to my spikes. A bit longer so I can make sure they are really well tied. Don't want to be having to re-tie them out there. Also did a bit of good old British Heath Robinson on the video cam. It's so very cold outside that I fear the battery won't last at all - so I've insulated the back of the camera using an old bit of plastic bag and some elastoplast tape to stick it down. It might help a bit! Off to breakfast now - then we're on. Met the race director Alexei last night just outside the hotel - he told me that anyone who does not take the ritual to appease the gods seriously runs badly. So I will be taking that seriously although for some religious reason it's disappointingly milk and not vodka this year that we get to sprinkle and drink before the off.



Mission Accomplished

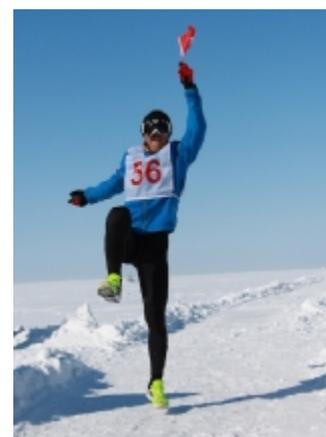


All went well yesterday and I crossed the line in 4:23. Very pleased with that. It all looks and is flat - and by and large you run in vehicle tracks. But it really saps your energy because you sink in a bit and don't quite get the traction for the effort - just like walking on compact snow. You make decent progress but feel more tired than usual. And of course some bits were deeper snow, other bits just plain ice, and a few bits uneven, broken ice. The weather as you will see from the videos was magnificent. Cold of course, but sunny and clear. After a while you actually felt too hot - but if you slowed down or took any

clothes off you quickly got very cold again. Running was fine until about 25k when I hit a bad patch (as did others) - but got going again around 30k. Actually quite harsh on knees, hips and feet. Unusually my feet were trashed by the end and required a little home surgery later on! The surface and unevenness constantly put you at awkward angles and made your feet move around too much I think. Videos have worked well - but to be honest it all looks a bit the same!! So I will stitch some together in small sections when I get home and I hope the commentary will be interesting. I've downloaded one - and it took ages (hours) so I'll leave you with just my finish video for now.

Reflections on Baikal

I'm spending a day in Irkutsk, the Paris of Siberia. I'm yet to find any similarity and have retreated to my room in the face of snow and body numbing cold. Sightseeing at -20 is a hurried affair. Those of us left at Baikal this morning realised how lucky we had been on Saturday. We think it was around -14 at the start, but warmed up considerably in the sun to around -4. Today was overcast with a distinct breeze and as I took my last walk out onto the lake I realised that in these conditions we would have been so much slower. So cold it slows everything down including your thinking. It's been a great adventure to a place not many have been - and even fewer in winter, with only hundreds having ever crossed the lake in one go on foot. Apart from the experience of the run, the most interesting thing has been to meet the other runners. I feel that the world is leaving me behind and more importantly many of our brightest and best from younger generations. These people are internationalists, living and working all over the world wherever opportunity exists, speaking three, four languages fluently, covering all continents as a matter of course. So many from all nations including UK live in Moscow, they all speak english, many love UK - but few see it, not even London, as a main centre for business. It is another place to do business - but the world grows elsewhere. I fear too many of us are too insular and believe in an importance that others no longer see. I can also now categorize marathon runners better. Most of my marathon friends are what I would call multi-marathoners. They do lots of marathons. They make my 18 last year look decidedly ordinary as they routinely clock up 30 or more year in year out. Yet out here these people are all adventure marathoners. They seek out real adventure, they like to go to remote and extreme places. They are all good extreme condition runners - yet they cannot believe I did 18 in a year, let alone 10 in 10 days. Take my good friend Ignacio from Barcelona - he has done 2 marathons. Greenland and Baikal! And this sort of pattern is not unusual. Philip, Trevor, Ignacio, Maybrit, Geoff - and everyone else, I hope we shall meet again somewhere, someday. I seem to fall between the two categories - but I'm comfortable with that. Over the coming days when I get home I will post some videos and photos which will speak for themselves. Do keep reading. Thanks to everyone who has supported me, and to all who have donated to Target Ovarian Cancer. I know just how very grateful they are to you - I'm just glad that I've given you an excuse to give a little to them. Thanks to Alexei and Lisa from Absolute Siberia - your passion for Baikal is wonderful, and your organisation first class and welcoming. It has been a privilege to visit you. I do feel that I have pushed to new limits, it has been an outstanding experience.



Posted by [Chris Heaton](#) at 06:22 6 comments



Lucy Ward (start number 16) supports charity fund, The Promise. The objectives of the fund are to assist Russian orphans and children with disabilities. During her campaign, preparing for the 8th Baikal Ice Marathon she has raised nearly 8000 pounds! She ran the half marathon with her right hand in plaster and so skillfully managed never to lose balance. Here is her marathon experience in Siberia, posted in the online edition of the English Telegraph. (See original here:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/active/9155272/Why-I-ran-a-marathon-in-frozen-Siberia.html>)

Why I ran a marathon in frozen Siberia

Lucy Ward braves frostbite and snow fields to take part in a race over ice-covered Lake Baikal, Siberia.



The Baikal marathon is widely regarded as one of the toughest global running events

I am, categorically, no iron woman, and much prefer my marathons to be the chocolate sort, so it's still a little mystifying that I found myself this month jogging, balaclava-clad, across a mile-deep frozen Siberian lake.

The Baikal International Ice Marathon, now in its eighth year and growing annually, is widely regarded as one of the toughest global running events, even at a time when such extreme challenges in the planet's wildest corners are growing in popularity.

Competitors run across sheet ice and snow hummocks from shore to shore of frozen Lake Baikal, a vast natural wonder containing over a fifth of the Earth's fresh water and an unparalleled ecology, as well as geothermal currents which occasionally crack its 1.5m (5ft) thick winter glaze.

I ended up in eastern Siberia (running only the half marathon, which finishes unnervingly in the centre of the lake) through curiosity and, strangely, semi-proximity. Our family is living in Moscow for a couple of years, and from here the flight to Irkutsk is a mere five hours.

Here in the Russian capital, we've become entirely used to snow, ice and temperatures well below zero, so the idea of carrying on the running I was used to at home (albeit a lot more seriously) didn't seem too crazy, and the thought of a Siberian event was far less daunting than it would have appeared from England.

When a friend's husband completed the Baikal half last year and returned with tales of vast white icy expanses – and, admittedly, mild frostbite – my desire to get closer to Baikal, the famed "soul of Siberia", only increased.

I signed up myself and my partner, and began pacing the embankment of the frozen Moskva river. As the temperatures dropped in January, I pressed on, resorting to the treadmill only when it got below -20C (-4F). I invested in waterproof trail shoes, snow gaiters, running spikes and a ninja-style balaclava that made passers-by dodge from my path. Most runners (130 of us from 20 countries) arrived at least two days early for the March 3rd run, assembling in the lakeside village of Listvyanka. Nerves jangled as the race director revealed the course had been changed to avoid cracks: "Baikal, she is breathing," he explained.

The conditions on Baikal are so out of the ordinary that they act as something of a leveller: there were hardened ultra-runners (Chris from Sheffield had run the gradient-filled Windermere marathon 10 times in as many days), as well as a pleasing group of crazy amateurs. Oisean from Dublin had agreed to take part in a drunken bet, shopping for equipment at the last minute and growing a beard to try to fend off the cold (it didn't work: his whiskers iced up).

The run, I won't deny, was something of a slog: even the toasts we drank in milk at the start to appease the lake spirits could not moderate the toughness of a featureless ice field where the brain can find no progress markers and distances are impossible to gauge. Yet the sense of achievement on reaching the little wooden hut set up in mid-lake after 21km (13 miles) and two hours 25 minutes was extraordinary, and as we drove back by hovercraft the otherworldly beauty of Baikal worked its magic."



Despite some difficulties, the 8th Baikal Ice Marathon "for the preservation of clean water" was a great success. So it was cool that some runners did not want to stop. Amazingly, Japanese Junya Nakadate and his friends, who have run previous races on Great Lake Baikal, turned around after the finish and ran a further couple kilometers, delaying the time of their separation from Lake Baikal, in an effort to get back on the ice...

Narrated by and with very kind regards from Baikal Ice Marathon Team:
www.absolute-siberia.com , www.baikal-marathon.org

(Photos by Vladimir Bereznhikh, Maria Shalneva, Alexey Nikiforov

Assistance in translation –by courtesy of Maybritt Elisabet Prahll –BIM winner & women world record holder in marathon running on ice)

To see more photos follow the links below:

<http://www.fun-run.ru/2012/03/08/bajkalskij-ledovyj-marafon-2012-prodoljenie-1/>

<http://www.fun-run.ru/2012/03/14/bajkalskij-ledovyj-marafon-2012-prodoljenie-2/>

<https://plus.google.com/photos/11201327775653247806/albums/5730417808966217297>

<https://plus.google.com/photos/11201327775653247806/albums/5730439212541767761>

Here is the news from the "Absolute Siberia" Events and Expeditions Bureau:

1. The date of the IX-th Baikal Ice Marathon "for the preservation of clean water" is March 3, 2013.
2. Our new project is announced for 2013: Ultra-marathon "Pole Lake" under the motto "Race of the Great Water" (second half of March), 1 & 2 stages (42 km and 21 km). Overnight at base camp on the lake's deepest point –Pole of Baikal Details very soon...

