

BAIKAL-AMUR MAINLINE AND DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM IN EASTERN SIBERIA

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ABSTRACT

The richest natural reserves that the Siberian and Far Eastern regions have along the Baikal-Amur Mainline (called in short in conformity with Russian practices as BAM) make this zone more attractive for tourists and people ready to go here for balneological

resorts, mineral waters, all kinds of mountain, water and any other trips and excursions. Opportunities of the region are assessed in the article, proceeding from the really existing prerequisites for development and outlined prospects for individual territories, projects and spheres of activity.

Keywords: Baikal-Amur Mainline, Eastern Siberia, Far East, tourism, economy, development of new territories, transport complex, development potential.

Background. Railways for the giant land areas of our country, with different climatic and natural conditions, uneven distribution of resources and population are a mass, universal mode of transport, which has great advantages. All-weather and year-round operation in conjunction with high speeds creates a huge daily and annual carrying capacity, which, in combination with the almost unlimited reserves of a fast and relatively simple step-by-step increase at a small expense of assets, labor and time promises efficiency in the future. With a low cost of rail transportation and the lowest unit cost of energy, this is the safest and most environmentally friendly mode of transport. All this predetermined the priority of the railway for transport communications in Siberia and the Far East. It became the shortest route through Siberia to the Pacific Ocean: at the beginning of the last century it was the Trans-Siberian Railway, and in the last quarter of the century – the Baikal-Amur Mainline, which further reduces the way to the Ocean (500 km on average).

Objective. The objective of the author is to consider ways for development of tourism in Eastern Siberia with the help of the Baikal-Amur Mainline.

Methods. The author uses general scientific methods, comparative analysis, scientific description.

Results.

I.

The accents changed over the course of the century, but the dominants remained unchanged: the importance of building the Baikal-Amur railway for the economic development of Siberia and the Far East was not denied, its economic feasibility was implied, and military-strategic necessity was emphasized. The change in the geopolitical situation in Russia, the growing importance of the eastern regions as sources of the richest natural resources and their geographical proximity to the dynamic market of the Asia-Pacific region have determined the need for active economic development of new territories and, first of all, having a railway infrastructure.

This is a priority that is dictated by the geopolitical and economic interests of the country. The modernization of the Trans-Siberian and Baikal-Amur Mainlines is called upon to contribute to the further economic progress to the East. Modernization also requires the development of firm service in trains going to the Far East. The named train is a modern equipment of cars and original design, high-quality service and a wide range of services.

On June 1, 2009, six named trains of JSC Russian Railways were transferred to the «Premium» class. They are distinguished by the maximum level of comfort and reliability. All the requirements for

named trains of the CIS and the Baltic States are set out in the Regulation «On the Named Passenger Train». All of them periodically pass the re-attestation in the FPD. Especially it concerns the trains going to the Far East. Each of them is decorated in a special style, which is reflected in both external and internal design, and has an individual name (usually associated with the region that the railway serves, its history and traditions).

Named trains are formed from passenger cars that are in operation no more than 12 years after the construction or major repair. The train has necessarily luxury cars with special service, the cost of which is included in the fare. Depending on the range of services provided, luxury cars are divided into economic, business class and luxury. In several named trains luxury cars of increased comfort (in the car – four compartments, heated floors, separate showers and toilet rooms) operate. However, the established standards are poorly observed in long distance trains in Siberia, as well as going to the Far East from the cities of Siberia.

Currently the bulk of trains in the BAM zone lag behind not only from world standards, but also from all-Russian ones. As such a guide a train Moscow–Beijing can serve. Everyone who has ever traveled long distances by rail knows that sometimes it is not so easy to buy tickets to the Far East. That is why the «Vostok» train was commissioned. It complies with all generally accepted requirements of international rail transportation. The first thing that attracts attention is the magnificent exterior of the train: the trains have a bright burgundy-white coloring. On each car there are inscriptions in two languages (Russian and Chinese) about the route. Conductors monitor the maintenance of the ideal order in the cars. To the positive moments is also attributed the presence of TV in the compartment, a toilet busy indicator, an electronic display showing time, and a temperature indicator. Such standards are to be met in an accelerated order in all trains that run through Siberia to the Far East.

II.

Tourism can become one of the directions of the economic growth of the BAM zone. The Baikal ring, which includes the Angara hydropower stations, the upper Lena, Tsarskaya Kotlovina, Sikhote-Alin and other places that have remarkable recreational conditions, is of great interest to international and Russian tourism. For several years, tourist companies offer sightseeing routes to the port of Vanino, in the Stalin camps, exotic tours along the rivers and lakes of the Amur River, rafting. One of the most attractive areas is the Trans-Baikal Territory. There is a huge potential for the development of domestic tourism, and literally of all kinds. But the infrastructure is still



very weak: everything is held up by the margin of strength of the Soviet period. What was built then, unfortunately, already worn out both physically and morally, and for a long time does not meet modern international standards. In addition, in Transbaikalia there are still few hotels, first of all, of tourist class. One of the problems is the ticket price, for example, from Moscow to Chita, which discourages people from any desire to come here and see the local beauties with their own eyes.

Extreme tourism is promising, because there are stormy rivers in Eastern Siberia, and interesting lakes are for watermen. Mecca of mountaineers is Kalarsky region, mountains, ridges. Sport tourism, as well as fishing – very promising directions, go with them in a team. It is important to pay attention to ecological tourism, and with it to rural and ethnic, because here there are Evenki settlements, Old Believers, and culture of descendants of Old Believers, Buryats who have preserved their traditions. It is possible to develop scientific tourism, in Transbaikalia area the remains of ancient animals, flora are found. There are unique places where an impressive species diversity of birds lives, and many of them are listed in the Red Book – this is already the sphere of interest of ornithologists.

The territory along which the western part of the BAM passes belongs to the Stanovoe Plateau, which is the southern part of the Baikal-Stanovoy physico-geographical region. Highlands consist of a system of mountain chains stretched from the west-southwest to the east-north-east and separated by narrow intermountain depressions. In the western part of it, the Upper Angara, Delun-Uranian, the North and South Muya Ranges rise, the peaks of which reach 2700 meters. Here, wild, picturesque treeless peaks dominate – loaches, crowning steep rocky ridges. Many ridges have sawtooth steep ridges with peaked vertices and crenellated peaks, the slopes of which are corroded by deep crusts. There are carats up to 2–3 km in diameter, the height of their back wall, often steep, reaches 500 m. At the bottom lakes with a diameter of up to 1 km are located. The crests and peaks rise above the bottom of the car and the valleys by 500–1000 m and more. Often they are crowned with numerous weathering remains, taking the form of quaint pillars and figures. Ridges are cut by deep hard-to-pass gorges and glacial trough valleys. The slopes of the ridges are steep (in some places over 60°) slopes, which are replaced by many hundred-meter rock walls. The hillsides are dissected by rectilinear trenches, spaced from each other by tens and hundreds of meters. Snow avalanches, rockfalls, water streams descend on them.

In order to preserve the unique nature of the Northern Baikal region, the Barguzinsky state reserve and the Frolikhinsky state reserve have been established. Tourists have long been attracted to the Barguzinsky Range. This was facilitated by quite convenient entrances from three sides: Barguzinsky tract, Lake Baikal and the valley of the Upper Angara, along which the BAM route was laid.

The development of the area began in the late 1950s, but the routes mostly passed along the valleys of the major rivers – Alla, Tompuda, Ulyun, Frolikha, Namama with the passage of uncomplicated passes. The most interesting central part of the ridge remained for a long time underdeveloped. Only from the 70's more detailed study of it started. At the same time, a number of passes were passed in the upper

reaches of the Kabanya, Alla, Talinga, Dolsa, Bolshaya Karpus rivers, as well as hill climbing to some dominant peaks was performed. It is interesting to climb the mountain 2714 m from the pass from the headwaters of the Talinga River to Dolsa, located northwest of the summit (there is a triangulation sign and a complex tour).

Here is an example of a ski route that can be designed in summer as a pedestrian route to Lake Baikal and the village of Nizhneangarsk. The trek begins from the village of Chenchka, the central farmstead of the Angarsk collective farm near the BAM. The route introduces the northern part of the Barguzin Range and Lake Baikal. The path lies through the village of Kumora to Lake Irkan, where the eponymous resort is located. The lake is surrounded by mountains overgrown with dense coniferous forest: from the south-east – the North-Muysky ridge, from the west and south-west – Barguzinsky. From here, a three-day radial exit along the rivers Ukuolkit and Nyandoni to the highest point of the western part of the North Muisky ridge is possible – a peak of 2561 m in the upper reaches of the Kumor River. Another route introduces the bald mountains zone of northern Barguzin. From the mouth of the creek Ulyug descend 2,5 km along the Svetly River to the confluence of the left tributary – Bogodokta. Steep forested, sometimes rocky slopes are close to the river. This is a unique in its beauty places that attract thousands of tourists from all over the country.

III.

Of course, BAM was conceived, explored, designed and, at last, almost built, not for the pleasure of tourists and recreators. But for the further development of Eastern Siberia and the Far East, the recreational significance of the regions located in the immediate vicinity of the mainline is of great importance. The unique beauty of the nature of Siberia, as well as thermal medicinal springs, which are very useful for health, are interesting for Russian and foreign tourists. Recreational zones of BAM should be considered as a real way of economic development through the creation of small recreational enterprises. And here it is possible to create as a stationary recreation (near thermal springs and fish-rich rivers), transit at several points, and mobile.

Already by 1977, in the zone of the western section of the BAM, mineral springs and therapeutic muds were used as wild resorts, some from the 17th century. Only in the Northern Transbaikalia and the Baikal region 17 types of mineral waters of five resort and recreational areas have been established. In the west to the north of the catchment of Lake Baikal Leno-Kirengsky area is located with beautiful mountain-taiga landscapes of the Irkutsk region and at least six types of mineral waters. Only radioactive sodium chloride brines of Ust-Kut are used, on which, in 1639, Yerofei Khabarov built a salt plant. The balneological and mud resort at this place cures arthritis, diseases of the peripheral nervous system, gynecological diseases.

Tourist camps in Ust-Kut can be used for pedestrian, water, horse routes, skiing, auto-bicycles and motorcycles. It is possible to «exploit» river Lena and its tributaries. In the valley of the river Kirenga there is exactly the same water as in Usolye Sibirskoye, for example, on the right bank, opposite to the village Klyuchi. Chloride salty waters overlook the right bank of the river Ulkan 12 km from the mouth. The waters of Klyuchi and Ulkan are recommended both for the treatment of the musculoskeletal system, and for the

digestive organs. In the basin of the river Kirenga there are sulfate brackish waters of the Krainian and Uchum types and fresh medicinal waters, for example, chloride radon-type Lipov type, which have a resolving effect, increase immunity, treat diseases of the organs of motion, digestion, and heart. Above the village Tarasovo and not far from the station Ulkan there is the Munok spring of mineral water of Truskavets type, rare in the former USSR.

The North Baikal resort and recreational area is located on the northern coast of Lake Baikal and in the valley of the river Upper Angara along the northern slope of the Barguzinsky Range. The taiga belt with cedar and cedar-fir forests turns into a pine-larch coastal strip with steppe forests. Optimum and satisfactory weather in warm weather is 130, in cold weather – 140 days. Water in July–August in shallow waters warms up to 18–23°C. Fishing, photo hunting for birds, foot, horse, water tourism – along the coast of Lake Baikal, ridges with access to the village Barguzin, as well as in the opposite direction, to the valley of the river Kirenga are for tourists here.

So, the western part of the BAM zone is in the future, the richest balneological province, which is now suitable both for sports and recreational activity, and recreation on rivers, small and medium lakes. Of course, the great Lake Baikal itself is of great importance. There, sport fishing, hunting, photo hunting, gathering, mountaineering are developing.

But this is not even half a four-thousand-kilometer BAM. Tourism can develop even faster on the basis of contracts with interested enterprises, organizations, foreign firms and individuals. This will provide an opportunity to raise additional funds for the implementation of the program for further economic development of the Baikal-Amur Mainline.

At the end of the entire route the most important Far Eastern port of Sovetskaya Gavan awaits tourists. Although the district is still deeply subsidized, it lays its own funds for the development of tourist infrastructure. The neighbors have been interested in this area for a long time already, there is information about it even in the catalogs of Japan for fishermen, hunters, extreme rest lovers, including the camps on the Koppi River, as well as about people who can guide and show the unique places of the region.

The region has a great balneological potential, on its territory there are unique thermal springs in the headwaters of the Tutto River, which in their composition are equated with the Caucasian mineral waters. In the neighboring area of Vanino, based on similar thermal springs, the «Hot Spring» sanatorium operates in the village of Tumnin, you can get there only by train. It is planned to make Sovetskaya Gavan the center of balneological rest. Therefore, the prospects for the development of the region are impressive. The tourism development program provides for the creation of a center for recreational and health tourism on the basis of medical sources. A mild climate, a fairly stable mild winter and a large amount of snow are excellent natural conditions for the development of the skiing area, winter sports. And there is a company that promotes this type of tourism and has an experience in obtaining regional grants.

Another area that is being actively developed is the call to the seaport of large cruise ships, including international ones. In Korsakovo, for example, more than 20 such calls are planned as early as 2017. To develop this direction, it is necessary to create a tourist scheme of the route through the territory of the district, comfortable conditions for tourists, convenient infrastructure, open new shops, develop own souvenir products. The local administration is now working on this. The large-scale development of tourism in Eastern Siberia and the Far East is possible only with the continuous improvement of the entire infrastructure of the Baikal-Amur Mainline combined with the development of other modes of transport.

Two years ago, the Circum-Baikal Railway (CBR) was 110 years old. The achievement of the industry, the region and the whole of Russia is the «Golden Buckle of Transsib». There are more than 800 cultural heritage sites on CBR. Of course, this railway has great prospects for the development of tourism. Russian Railways regularly receive proposals from colleagues from China and Mongolia on the organization of tourist routes to Irkutsk with a visit to the CBR. Interest in this unique place is also high in Russia. Only in 2015 the CBR was visited by more than 10 thousand people. To transport foreign tourists from Mongolia and China, Russian Railways plan to organize the movement of additional cars to Irkutsk in the international passenger trains Moscow–Beijing and Moscow–Ulan Bator.

Conclusion. The popularization of railway tourism, in particular on the CBR, will not only bring a new impetus to the development of the East-Siberian Railway, but also create favorable conditions for the regional economy and strengthen cultural ties between Russia and foreign countries.

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