



TOURA D´OR 2006

Category “Informational films and documentaries”

Lake Baikal – Siberia’s Mysterious Soul

**ZDF – Editorial Department Wissen und Service/Reiselust
(43 minutes, German, 2005)**

The TOURA D´OR 2006 is awarded to the documentary *Lake Baikal – Siberia’s Mysterious Soul*. It was produced by Bernd Reufels and Andrea Schubert on behalf of the ZDF (Editorial Department Wissen und Service/Reiselust).

The film takes the viewer on a journey to a destination that is indeed worth seeing, into a cold and sometimes rough and inhospitable region. It is during the month of May that we join a tour from the north to the south of Lake Baikal that stretches over 600 kilometres. The “well of the planet“ is the oldest and deepest lake on earth, harbouring more water than any other lake. The encounters with seal hunters and hat makers, with fishermen and ship builders portray the living and working conditions of the local people. The millennium-old tradition of shamanism depicts basic traits of the local culture of the Buryats.

So far, the region has only partially been opened up for tourism, but it is being systematically developed by the indigenous people. A circular path around the lake is being developed with the assistance of international volunteers, and the income from a “tourism village” contributes to the support of social projects. Through development young people of the region are to be shown a possible perspective for their future which might prevent them from migrating to other locations. A dropout from Germany shows how alternative life styles can also be realized in Siberia. A rail journey on “one of the most wonderful lines of the world” is presented as offering splendid views and as being very comfortable.

Siberia’s Mysterious Soul propagates a kind of tourism that puts the least possible burden on people, society, culture and nature. The film enhances the understanding for the everyday life of the local people and encourages viewers to further explore the region.

Beautiful but by no means euphemistic images corroborate both the information and the emotions proliferated by the documentary. The proverbial “magic of the Baikal” is appealing and tempting.