



Trans-Siberian Railway



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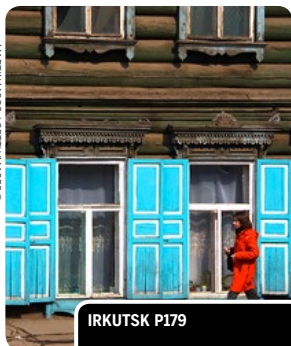
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Itineraries

**2
WEEKS**

The Trans-Mongolian Route

This highly popular journey between **Moscow** and **Beijing** goes via the Mongolian capital of **Ulaanbaatar**, allowing you to compare and contrast the cultures and landscapes of three countries. The train journey in itself takes almost six days, which allows several days in each of the three capital cities for exploration.

In Moscow allow at least three days during which time you should see Red Square and the Kremlin, and take in at least one large gallery. At the other end of the line, the Forbidden City, the Great Wall, the Summer Palace and Tiān'ānmén Square will each take a day. Between these two very different geographic points, taiga, steppe and desert unfold in a mesmerising landscape panorama, with views of iconic Lake Baikal, the Gobi Desert and the Great Wall of China.

A nonstop itinerary is best suited to travellers who want to see Moscow and Beijing, enjoy the changes of landscape, and experience life on the train as it transitions from Europe to Asia. It can be covered in either direction, but if you wish to spend time in Moscow at the start of the journey, a transit visa will not suffice.

4
WEEKS

The Trans-Siberian Route

Although this route can be done in either direction, we suggest going against the general flow by starting in **Vladivostok**, at the far eastern end of Russia, so you can finish up with a grand party in either **Moscow** or, better still, **St Petersburg**. The route takes six days without stopovers on the *Rossiya*, the premium train 1/2, which means the absolute minimum required for this itinerary is one week. However, it is best done with stopovers over three to four weeks, and can easily be tailored to your own schedule.

Vladivostok, situated on a stunning natural harbour, merits several days to enjoy Russia's Pacific seaboard and rest from jetlag. It's also worth taking a break of a couple of days at **Khabarovsk**, a lively city on the banks of the Amur River that's an overnight hop from Vladivostok. Save another couple of days for **Ulan-Ude**, a fascinating city where Russian and Buryat cultures mingle, and from where you can venture into the steppes to visit Russia's principal Buddhist monastery, **Ivolginsky Datsan**. Just west of Ulan-Ude the railway hugs the southern shores of magnificent **Lake Baikal**. Allow at least five days to see the lake, visit the equally lovely **Olkhon Island** and spend time in **Irkutsk**, one of the Trans-Siberian's most important rail junctions.

Krasnoyarsk, on the Yenisey River, affords the opportunity for scenic cruises along one of Siberia's most pleasant waterways and can easily be visited on a two-day stopover to see the city itself and the nearby Stolby Nature Reserve. Also well worth stops are the big city **Novosibirsk**, from where you can branch out to the charming Siberian town of **Tomsk**, and **Tyumen**, the access point for **Tobolsk** with its historic kremlin overlooking the Irtysh River.

Crossing the Ural Mountains into European Russia, schedule a stop in **Yekaterinburg**, a city stocked with interesting museums and sites connected to the murder of the last tsar and his family. Further west **Nizhny Novgorod** has some good museums and restaurants plus a thrilling cable car ride. Finally don't miss the tranquil Golden Ring towns of **Vladimir** and/or **Suzdal**, both packed with onion-domed churches, and a million miles away from the manic pace of modern Moscow.

3
WEEKS**Běijīng Loop**

This circular itinerary starts and finishes in Běijīng and can be done in either direction. Allow time in China's capital to see some of the key sights.

An excellent overnight service connects Běijīng with **Hā'ěrbin (Harbin)**. Russians came here at the end of the 19th century to build the railway, and handsome architectural evidence of their stay remains. The Chinese–Russian border lies an overnight train ride away at **Mánzhōulǐ**. If you're not on one of the weekly Trans-Manchurian services that continue across the border and through to Moscow, it's a process of hopping on a bus across to **Zabaikalsk** on the Russian side, where you can reconnect with trains through to **Chita**. Strike out to a couple of beautiful Buddhist monasteries at **Aginskoe**. Detour west from **Ulan-Ude** to **Lake Baikal**, where bases for exploring the lake include **Slyudyanka**, **Irkutsk**, **Listvyanka** and **Olkhon Island**.

Complete the loop by heading to **Ulaanbaatar**, which merits a couple days' stopover. It's a two-night journey back to **Běijīng** through the Gobi Desert.

2
WEEKS**BAM**

The 3400km Baikal-Amur Mainline (BAM) travels through some of Siberia's most rugged landscapes. The line officially starts in the drab town of **Tayshet**, but the closest big city, **Krasnoyarsk**, has an airport if you wish to skip all points further west.

At **Bratsk** the train crosses a 1km-long dam. The town also has an excellent open-air ethnographic museum where you can see many traditional Siberian buildings. **Severobaikalsk**, on the northern tip of Lake Baikal, is the best base for exploring this relatively unvisited end of the lake.

En route to **Tynda** the line climbs over and burrows through mountains, the longest tunnel being 15.3km at **Severomuysk**. Home of the BAM construction company's headquarters, **Tynda** is a must-stop for its BAM museum and good *banya* (bath-house). Continue working your way east to **Komsomolsk-na-Amure**, the largest and most attractive city on the line and a great place to ponder the sacrifices and achievements made by hardy Soviet pioneers. Finish up your journey in **Khabarovsk**, on the main Trans-Sib line and also with an airport.



Michael Kohn

Trans-Mongolian Route, Mongolian Today, Mongolian Culture & Cuisine Michael first rode the Trans-Mongolia Railway in 1997, stepping off the train in Ulaanbaatar on a chilly -30°C December day. That was the start of an extended stay in Mongolia, where he worked for an English-language newspaper and various international media. He has since chugged along most northeast Asia's rail routes, including the remote train journey from Choibalsan to the Russian border. Michael has

updated four editions of Lonely Planet's *Mongolia* guide and three editions of Lonely Planet's *China*. He is currently based in Ulaanbaatar.



Shawn Low

Trans-Manchurian Route Shawn grew up in hot, humid, food-crazy Singapore but later made his way further south to less hot, less humid, food-crazy Melbourne (Australia, not Florida). He's spent the last eight years working for Lonely Planet: as an editor, commissioning editor, author, TV host and travel editor. This time, Shawn travelled along the unsung Trans-Manchurian line through grand Chinese-Russian cities, China's rust belt, and the lush Inner Mongolian grasslands before

sweeping into bustling Beijing. Hey, it's a hard job but someone's gotta do it right? He's on Twitter @shawnlw.



Tom Masters

St Petersburg Tom first came to St Petersburg in 1996 while studying Russian at the School of Slavonic & East European Studies, part of the University of London. He loved the city so much that he came back after graduating and worked as a writer and editor at the *St Petersburg Times*, a job that allowed him to get to know the city in intimate detail. While since living in London and Berlin, Tom has always retained a strong link with the city, authoring the last three editions of

Lonely Planet's *St Petersburg* guide. You can see more of Tom's work at www.tommasters.net.



Daniel McCrohan

Bèijīng, China Today, Chinese Culture & Cuisine Daniel has been living in Bèijīng for more than a decade, trying in vain to perfect his ropery Chinese, whilst developing a taste for raw garlic (there's no better accompaniment to a bowl of noodles, apparently). He is the creator of the iPhone app, *Beijing on a Budget*, a co-host for the TV series, *Best in China*, and has worked on more than 20 Lonely Planet guidebooks, including *China* and *Mongolia*. During his time in Bèijīng, Daniel

has travelled the Trans-Mongolian route by train, bus, jeep and bicycle, although has yet to make it past Ulaanbaatar; he blames the incredible Mongolian hospitality. Contact him through danielmccrohan.com.

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Regis St Louis

Ulan Ude to Vladivostok An early fan of Gogol and Dostoevsky, Regis spent his university years in America and Moscow immersed in the world of Rus, in pursuit of a rather impractical degree in Slavic Languages and Literatures. On this trip across the vast Far East, Regis dined on frozen fish and fermented mare's milk in Yakutsk, searched for secret hot springs in Kamchatka and spent far too many hours on overnight trains. A full-time travel writer since 2003, Regis has contributed to more than 40 Lonely Planet titles. He lives in Brooklyn, New York.

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Mara Vorhees

Moscow Mara's first visit to Moscow was in 1990, when the lines inside GUM were dwarfed only by the lines outside Lenin's Tomb. She witnessed the post-communist transition from her vantage point in the Ural Mountains. Nowadays, she often travels with her twins (who celebrated their 4th birthday in Moscow). Follow their adventures at www.havetwinswilltravel.com.

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Contributing Author

Leonid Ragozin contributed to the Moscow to Yekaterinburg chapter. He spent 12 years voyaging through different parts of the BBC, with a break for a four-year stint as a foreign correspondent for the Russian Newsweek. Leonid is currently a freelance journalist, largely focusing on the war in Ukraine, a country he has also covered for Lonely Planet.



OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Beijing and Delhi, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

OUR WRITERS



Simon Richmond

Coordinating author Simon first visited Russia in 1994, spending time in St Petersburg and Moscow and travelling by train from there to Central Asia. He's since travelled the breadth of the nation from Kamchatka in the Far East to Kalingrad in the far west, stopping off at many points between. An award-winning travel writer and photographer, Simon has co-authored the last four editions of the *Russia* guide for Lonely Planet as well as the first three editions of the

Trans-Siberian Railway guide. He's contributed to many other titles for the company, ranging from Cape Town to Korea. Read more about his travels at www.simonrichmond.com

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Greg Bloom

Yekaterinburg to Krasnoyarsk Greg cut his teeth in the former Soviet Union as a journalist and later editor-in-chief of the *Kyiv Post*. He left Ukraine in 2003, but returns frequently to the region. In the service of Lonely Planet, he has been detained in Uzbekistan, taken a shlagbaum to the head in Kyiv, swam in the dying Aral Sea, snowboarded down volcanoes in Kamchatka and hit 100km/h in

a Latvian bobsled. These days Greg divides his time between Cambodia and the Philippines. Read about his trips at www.mytripjournal.com/bloomblogs.

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Marc Di Duca

Lake Baikal: Krasnoyarsk to Ulan Ude, Baikal-Amur Mainline Marc has spent over two decades crisscrossing the former communist world, half of that time as a travel guide author. Stints on previous editions of Lonely Planet's *Russia* and *Trans-Siberian Railway* were preceded by other guides to Moscow, St Petersburg and Lake Baikal. Stalking Decembrists across four million square kilometres, ice fishing on frozen Lake Baikal, and munching through cholesterol-elevating amounts of Buryat buuzy all formed part of research on the Trans-Sib this time round.

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Anthony Haywood

Moscow to Yekaterinburg After studying literature and later Russian language at university, Anthony travelled to Moscow during the post-Soviet, pre-anything days of January 1992. Journeys in Russia since that chaotic time have taken him to many different regions, including Siberia to research his book *Siberia, A Cultural History*, as well as Moscow, St Petersburg, and to the Volga Region and Urals to research various editions of this book. He coordinated the 4th edition of

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OVER MORE PAGE WRITERS

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