

PAGE  
56ON THE  
ROADYOUR COMPLETE DESTINATION GUIDE  
In-depth reviews, detailed listings  
and insider tipsPAGE  
377SURVIVAL  
GUIDEVITAL PRACTICAL INFORMATION TO  
HELP YOU HAVE A SMOOTH TRIP

Directory A–Z .....	378
Transport .....	394
Health .....	403
Language & Glossary .....	407
Index .....	430
Map Legend .....	438



THIS EDITION WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED BY

Anthony Haywood

Marc Bennetts, Greg Bloom, Marc Di Duca, Michael Kohn, Tom Masters,  
Leonid Ragozin, Mara Vorhees

# PLAN YOUR TRIP

## YOUR PLANNING TOOL KIT

Photos, itineraries, lists and suggestions to help you put together your perfect trip

Welcome to the Trans-Siberian Railway... 2

16 Top Experiences..... 6

Need to Know ..... 14

What's New ..... 16

If You Like ..... 17

Month by Month ..... 20

Choosing Your Route ..... 22

Itineraries..... 28

Booking Tickets..... 32

Arranging Your Visas ..... 42

Life on the Rails ..... 46

Routes at a Glance ..... 53



### need to know

**When to Go**

**Your Daily Budget**

High season	US\$50-100
Low season	US\$20-50
Super low season	US\$10-20

**What to Expect**

**Language**

**Money**

**Transport**

**Health**

**Travel Documents**

**Other**



# UNDERSTAND YOUR JOURNEY

## GET MORE FROM YOUR TRIP

Learn about the big picture, so you can make sense of what you see

History of the Railway... 326

Siberian Travellers ..... 342

Russia Today..... 346

Russia ..... 349

Mongolia Today ..... 356

Mongolia..... 358

China Today ..... 364

China ..... 366

Landscapes & Wildlife ... 372

### belief systems

**If Russia were 300 people**

100% Orthodox

10% Muslim

10% Buddhist

10% Other

**for Russians!**

The choice is the one to make

**1860-1917**

**1917-1976**

**1976-1991**

**1991-2000**

**2000-2011**

**2011-2014**

**2014-2017**

**2017-2020**

**2020-2021**

**2021-2022**



➤ **Every listing is recommended by our authors, and their favourite places are listed first**

➤ **Look out for these icons:**



Our author's top recommendation



A green or sustainable option



No payment required

# On the Road

**MOSCOW** .....58

**ST PETERSBURG** ....93

**MOSCOW TO  
YEKATERINBURG** ... 119

Vladimir .....123

Bogolyubovo .....125

Suzdal .....126

Nizhny Novgorod ..... 131

Perm.....137

Around Perm..... 141

Kungur .....142

**YEKATERINBURG TO  
KRASNOYARSK** ... 144

Yekaterinburg .....148

Around Yekaterinburg ... 155

Tyumen .....156

Tobolsk.....160

Omsk .....164

Novosibirsk .....165

Tomsk.....169

**LAKE BAIKAL:  
KRASNOYARSK TO  
ULAN-UDE**..... 176

Krasnoyarsk .....180

Around Krasnoyarsk .....186

Irkutsk .....187

Around Irkutsk .....197

Western Lake Baikal .....197

Listvyanka .....197

Port Baikal.....201

Bolshie Koty ..... 202

Olkhon Island..... 202

South Baikal & the  
Tunka Valley ..... 204

Ulan-Ude ..... 206

Around Ulan-Ude ..... 213

Eastern Baikal.....213

**ULAN-UDE TO  
VLADIVOSTOK** ..... 216

Chita.....223

Around Chita.....227

Nerchinsk .....227

Blagoveshchensk ..... 228

Birobidzhan.....229

Khabarovsk ..... 231

Vladivostok .....238

Around Vladivostok .....249

**THE BAIKAL-AMUR  
MAINLINE (BAM)** .. 250

Bratsk.....254

Severobaikalsk .....255

Around Severobaikalsk .. 258

Tynda .....259

Komsomolsk-na-Amure .. 261

Around Komsomolsk-na-  
Amure..... 264

**THE TRANS-  
MONGOLIAN  
ROUTE** .....265

Kyakhta, Russia .....269

Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia ... 270

Around Ulaanbaatar .... 284

Èrlián (Erenhot), China .. 286

Dàtóng, China..... 286

**THE TRANS-  
MANCHURIAN  
ROUTE** ..... 290

Mǎnzhōulǐ ..... 294

Hǎ'ěrbīn .....295

Chángchūn ..... 300

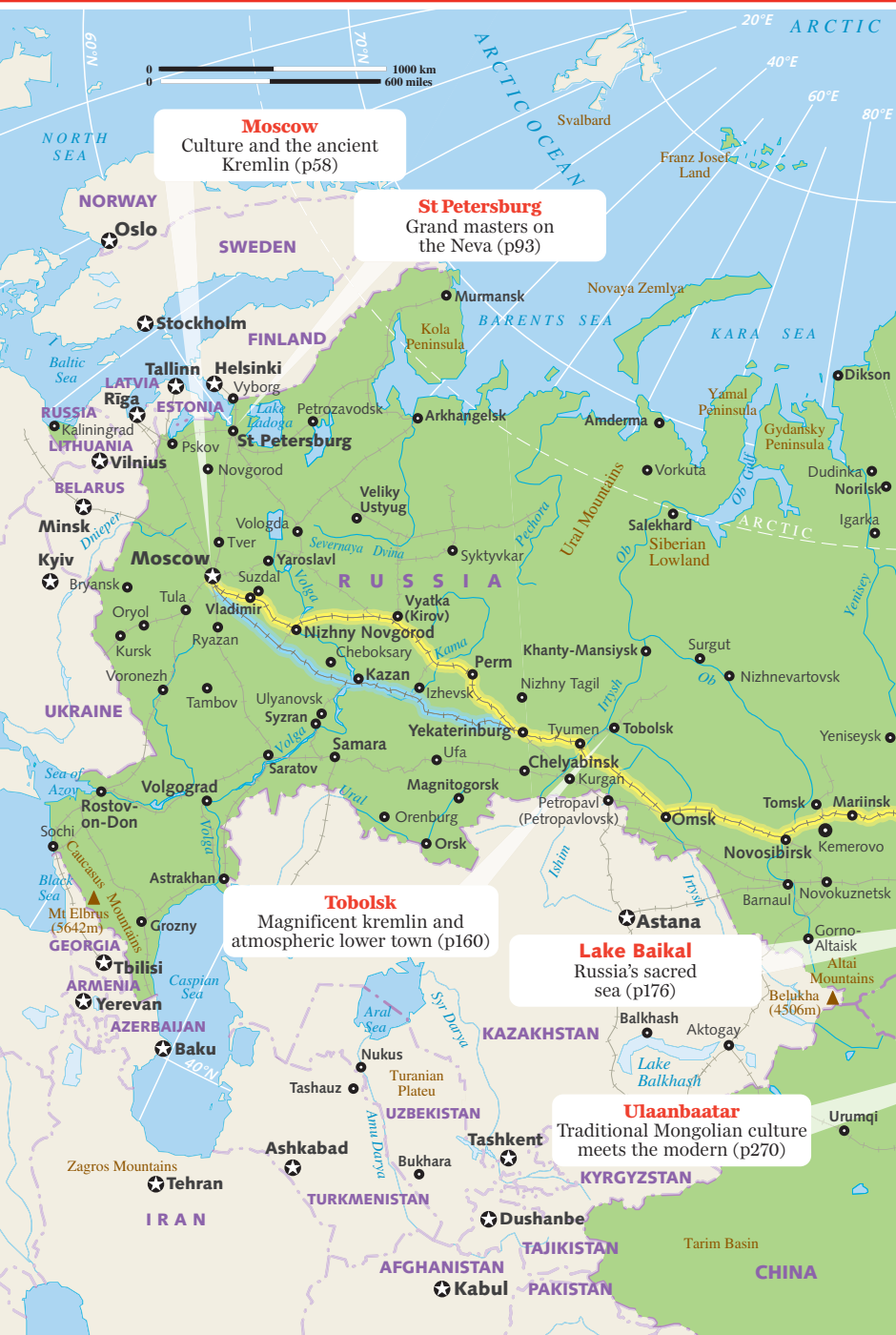
Shānhǎiguān..... 300

**BĚIJĪNG** .....301

AROUND BĚIJĪNG ..... 321

Great Wall of China ..... 321

# Trans-Siberian Railway



**Moscow**  
Culture and the ancient Kremlin (p58)

**St Petersburg**  
Grand masters on the Neva (p93)

**Tobolsk**  
Magnificent kremlin and atmospheric lower town (p160)

**Lake Baikal**  
Russia's sacred sea (p176)

**Ulaanbaatar**  
Traditional Mongolian culture meets the modern (p270)





## 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 Melbourne, London and Oakland, 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



### Anthony Haywood

**Coordinating author; Moscow to Yekaterinburg, Yekaterinburg to Krasnoyarsk**

Anthony was born in the port city of Fremantle, Western Australia, and pulled anchor early on to mostly hitchhike through Europe and the USA. Aberystwyth in Wales and Ealing in London were his wintering grounds at the time. He later studied comparative literature in Perth and Russian language in Melbourne. In the 1990s, fresh from a spell in post-Soviet, pre-anything Moscow, he moved to Germany.

Today he works as a German-based freelance writer and journalist and divides his time between Göttingen (Lower Saxony) and Berlin. His book, *Siberia, A Cultural History*, was published in 2010.



### Marc Bennetts

**Yekaterinburg to Krasnoyarsk** Marc moved to Russia in 1997 and immediately fell in love with the country's pirate-CD markets. Since then, he has written about Russian spies, Chechen football and Soviet psychics for a variety of national newspapers, including the *Guardian* and the *Times*. In 2008 his book *Football Dynamo: Modern Russia and the People's Game* was released. He is currently working on a book about Russia's fascination with the occult.



### Greg Bloom

**Ulan-Ude to Vladivostok, The Baikal-Amur Mainline (BAM)** 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, swum in the dying Aral Sea, snowboarded down volcanoes in Kamchatka, and hit 100km/h in a Latvian bobsled. These days Greg lives in Cambodia.

Read more about Greg at:  
[lonelyplanet.com/members/gbloom4](http://lonelyplanet.com/members/gbloom4)



### Marc Di Duca

**Lake Baikal: Krasnoyarsk to Ulan-Ude, Ulan-Ude to Vladivostok, The Baikal-Amur Mainline (BAM)** Marc has spent nigh on two decades crisscrossing the former communist world, the last seven years of them as a travel-guide author. Stints on previous editions of LP's *Russia* and *Trans-Siberian Railway* were preceded by other guides to Moscow, St Petersburg and Lake Baikal. During research on his stretch of the Trans-Sib this time around, Marc somehow found himself freezing

extremities in Lake Baikal, attending Ulan-Ude opera in hiking gear and facing a starter of frozen horse liver.

Read more about Marc at:  
[lonelyplanet.com/members/madidu](http://lonelyplanet.com/members/madidu)

OVER MORE  
PAGE WRITERS

Published by Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd

ABN 36 005 607 983

4th edition – Apr 2012

ISBN 978 1 74179 565 3

© Lonely Planet 2012 Photographs © as indicated 2012

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in Singapore

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be copied, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, except brief extracts for the purpose of review, and no part of this publication may be sold or hired, without the written permission of the publisher. Lonely Planet and the Lonely Planet logo are trademarks of Lonely Planet and are registered in the US Patent and Trademark Office and in other countries. Lonely Planet does not allow its name or logo to be appropriated by commercial establishments, such as retailers, restaurants or hotels. Please let us know of any misuses: [lonelyplanet.com/ip](http://lonelyplanet.com/ip).

Although the authors and Lonely Planet have taken all reasonable care in preparing this book, we make no warranty about the accuracy or completeness of its content and, to the maximum extent permitted, disclaim all liability arising from its use.



### **Michael Kohn**

[The Trans-Mongolian Route](#), [The Trans-Manchurian Route](#), [Běijīng](#) Michael first rode the Trans-Mongolian 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 of northeast Asia's rail routes, including the remote train journey from Choibalsan to the Russian border.

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



### **Tom Masters**

[St Petersburg](#) Tom first came to St Petersburg in 1996 while studying Russian at the School of Slavonic & East European Studies in 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*. Since then he's been based in London and Berlin but returns regularly to 'Piter' to take on documentary work and write freelance articles and Lonely Planet guides.



### **Leonid Ragozin**

[Moscow](#), [Moscow to Yekaterinburg](#) Leonid devoted himself to beach dynamics when he studied geology in Moscow. But, for want of really nice beaches in Russia, he helped gold miners in Siberia and sold InterRail tickets before embarking on a journalist career. After eight years with the BBC he became a foreign correspondent for *Russian Newsweek* – a job that took him to such unlikely destinations as Bhutan and Ecuador. Back at the BBC he plunged into the turbulent sea of TV news.



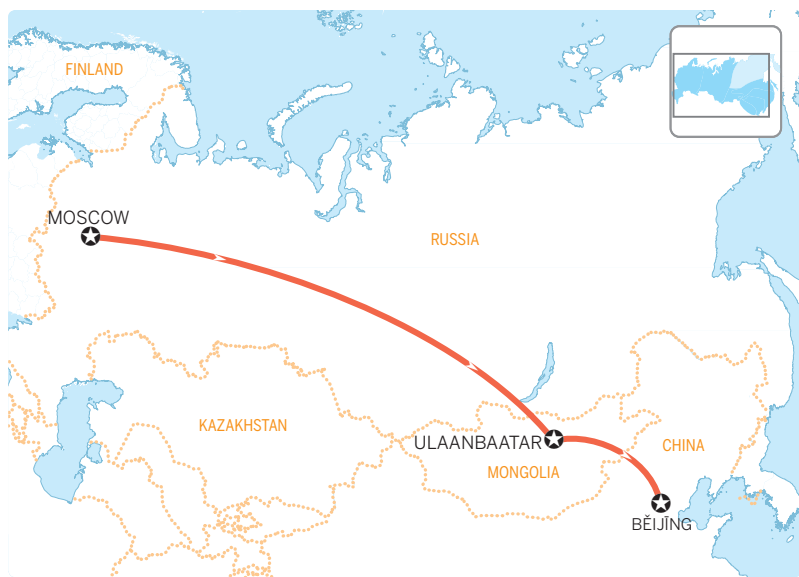
### **Mara Vorhees**

[Moscow](#) Mara has been travelling to Moscow since it was the capital of a different country. The pen-wielding traveller has worked on dozens of Lonely Planet titles, including *Moscow* and *St Petersburg*. When not roaming around Russia, Mara lives in a pink house in Somerville, Massachusetts, with her husband, two kiddies and two kitties.



# itineraries

*Whether you've got six days or 60, these itineraries provide a starting point for the trip of a lifetime. Want more inspiration? Head online to [lonelyplanet.com/thorntree](http://lonelyplanet.com/thorntree) to chat with other travellers.*

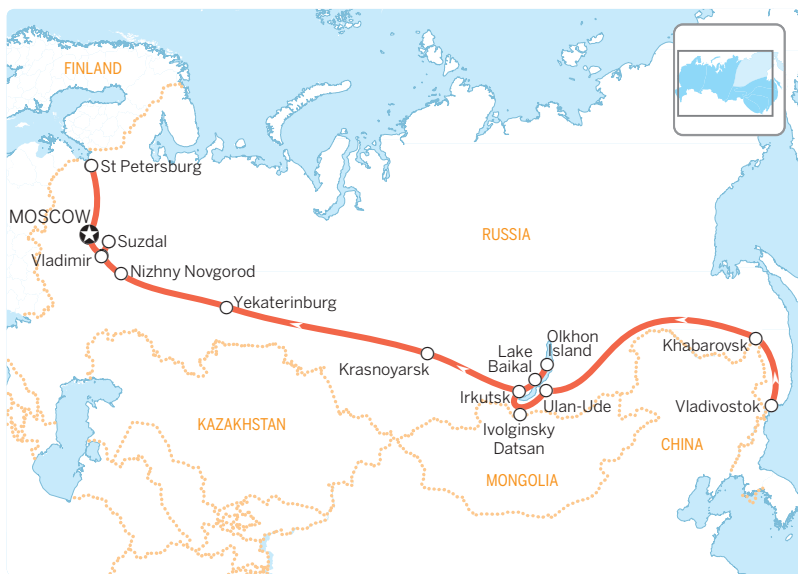


Two Weeks

## The Trans-Mongolian Route

This highly popular journey between **Moscow** and **Běijīng** goes via the Mongolian capital of **Ulaanbaatar**, allowing you to compare and contrast the landscapes of three countries. A nonstop itinerary is best suited to travellers who want to see Moscow and Běijīng, enjoy the changes of landscape, and experience life on the train as it rolls across 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.

The train journey in itself takes almost six days, which allows several days in Moscow and several in Běijīng to explore two of the world's most dynamic capitals. In Moscow, spend three days visiting Red Square and the Kremlin, and taking in at least one large gallery. At the other end of the line, the Forbidden City, the Great Wall, the Summer Palace and Tiananmen 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.



## One to Four 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. It is best done, however, 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 if you have flown in from other time zones. It's also worth taking a break of a couple of days or more 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. If you want to visit the Stolby Nature Reserve or take an excursion on the Yenisey River, however, plan on four days to do this comfortably. Crossing the Ural Mountains into European Russia, schedule a stop in **Yekaterinburg**, a bustling historic city stocked with interesting museums and sites connected to the murder of the last tsar and his family. Finally, you have the choice of pausing in cities such as **Nizhny Novgorod**, which has some good museums and restaurants, or stopovers in the tranquil Golden Ring towns of **Vladimir** and/or **Suzdal**, both packed with onion-domed churches, and a million miles away from the pace of the megacities to come.



## Four Weeks The Běijīng Loop

You will want to schedule plenty of time in historic, dynamic **Běijīng** either at the start or end of the trip. A day each is needed to see the Forbidden City and Tiananmen Square, the Great Wall and the Summer Palace.

An excellent overnight service connects the capital with **Hā'ěrbin**, famous for the ice sculptures of its midwinter Ice & Snow Festival. Russians came here at the end of the 19th century to build the railway, and handsome architectural evidence of their stay lies at the city's heart close to the Songhua River. Take a couple of days to enjoy Hā'ěrbin's cosmopolitan atmosphere and visit the nearby **Siberian Tiger Park**.

The Chinese–Russian border lies an overnight train ride away at **Mǎnzhōulǐ**. 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**. This pleasant city is a great base for exploring a relatively unvisited area of Siberia where you'll discover a couple of beautiful Buddhist monasteries at **Aginskoe**. From **Ulan-Ude** you can immediately branch down towards Mongolia, but since you've come this far it would be a great shame not to first venture further west to see **Lake Baikal**. Apart from Ulan-Ude, possible bases for exploring the lake include **Slyudyanka**, **Irkutsk**, **Listvyanka** and **Olkhon Island**. This part of the journey is where where travellers spend the most time, and it's well worth crossing from Listvyanka to **Port Baikal** to briefly walk along the lakeshore on the Circumbaikal Railway line. While in Listvyanka, also try to fit in a short walk on a section of the Great Baikal Trail, or from Irkutsk spend a couple of days in the **Tunka Valley**.

After that, board one of the trains to **Ulaanbaatar**, which is certainly worth at least a couple of days. Its highlight is the lively and colourful Gandan Khiid monastery. From Ulaanbaatar, it's a two-night journey back to **Běijīng** through the Gobi Desert.



### Three Weeks Volga & Lake Baikal

From **Moscow** enjoy an overnight trip to **Kazan**, perhaps taking the premium train with showers and double beds. Spend two to three days exploring the capital of Tatarstan with its splendid kremlin and museums; allow at least a full day for the city and another day for an excursion on the Volga. From Kazan continue to **Yekaterinburg** in the Ural Mountains and spend five days visiting the Romanov sites and Urals attractions. Siberia begins after that, with a night in **Tyumen** and side trip north to **Tobolsk**, which can be completed comfortably in three to four days. The journey continues with two days in **Novosibirsk**, the unofficial capital of Siberia and Russia's third-largest city, situated on the Ob River. **Krasnoyarsk** is closing the gap on Novosibirsk for the title of capital, and is well worth a couple of days in order to explore the city and perhaps visit the Stolby Nature Reserve or take a boat trip on the Yenisey River. From Krasnoyarsk the route continues to **Irkutsk**, where at least five days can be scheduled in for the sights of Lake Baikal.

### 15 Days BAM

The 3400km Baikal-Amur Mainline (Baikalo-Amurskaya Magistral, or BAM) travels through some of the most rugged and unforgiving Siberian 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 of the traditional Siberian buildings that were rescued when the dam was built. **Severobaikalsk**, on the northern tip of Lake Baikal, is the best base for exploring this relatively unvisited end of the lake and it also has a small BAM museum.

En route to **Tynda** the line climbs over and burrows through mountains, the longest tunnel being 15.3km at **Severomuyusk**. Home of the BAM construction company's headquarters, Tynda is a must-stop for its comprehensive BAM museum and good *banya* (bathhouse). Continue working your way east to the St Petersburg-styled **Komsomolsk-na-Amure**, the largest city on the line and a great place to ponder the sacrifices and achievements made by hardy Soviet pioneers.

© Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd. To make it easier for you to use, access to this chapter is not digitally restricted. In return, we think it's fair to ask you to use it for personal, non-commercial purposes only. In other words, please don't upload this chapter to a peer-to-peer site, mass email it to everyone you know, or resell it. See the terms and conditions on our site for a longer way of saying the above - 'Do the right thing with our content.'