



# Experience Big Trans-Sib

Along the way  
Beijing  
Ulaanbaatar  
Irkutsk  
Moscow

## Leaving from Beijing to Moscow

This is a popular trip - for some good reasons! It combines the two en-route stops you absolutely shouldn't miss (Mongolia & Lake Baikal), but within a time frame that enables you to fit it into a two week vacation from work (if you're a victim of such pressures). Even so it's bursting with rich content all along the way!



## What's included

### FULL ON

- Train**
  - > 4-berth rail for complete journey (pre-assigned berths)
  - > option to upgrade to 2-berth
- Beijing**
  - > 1 night 3★ hotel
- Ulaanbaatar**
  - > all transportation
  - > 2 nights Elstei Ger Lodge all meals
  - > 1 night 4★ hotel, breakfast
  - > City tour of Ulaanbaatar
- Irkutsk**
  - Choice of programmes either Siberian Village or Fishermen's Cape of Baikal.
  - Siberian Village**
    - > all transportation
    - > 2 nights home-stay Listvyanka Village all meals
    - > excursion option
  - Fishermen's Cape of Baikal**
    - > all transportation
    - > 2 nights home-stay Bolshoe Goloustnoe all meals
- Moscow**
  - > transfer on arrival to your hotel
  - > 2 nights 3★ hotel, breakfast
  - > 3 hour personalised walking tour with local expert

### NO FRILLS

- Train**
  - > 4-berth rail for complete journey (pre-assigned berths)
  - > option to upgrade to 2-berth
- Beijing**
  - > 1 night 1★ hotel
- Ulaanbaatar – (city based stay)**
  - > transfer on arrival to your hotel
  - > 3 nights 1★ hotel, breakfast
  - > transfer to the station on departure
- Irkutsk (city based stay)**
  - > transfer on arrival
  - > 3 night home-stay Irkutsk City, breakfast
  - > transfer to the station on departure
- Moscow**
  - > transfer on arrival to your hotel
  - > 2 nights 1★ hotel, breakfast

## In the know...

The word “Kremlin” isn’t Russian - it’s from a medieval Tartar word meaning “fortress”. There used to be kremlins all over Russia in the days when the Mongols were a threat. There’s even one in Siberia, at Tobolsk.

“Siberia” means “the sleeping land” and isn’t a Russian word - it comes from the Tartar name for the area, “Sibir”.

Lake Baikal is the world’s largest, and has more statistics than any other lake.

Genghis Khan’s name is correctly spelt “Chinghiskhan”, although his name at birth was Temujin. Despite his reputation for ferocity, the oldest annals of Mongolian history reveal he was frightened of dogs.



## No ordinary trip

At The Russia Experience we like to ditch the clichés, discard the puff and concentrate on what we do best – bringing to life the world’s longest train route: the places visited, the encounters made and the realisation of a journey that is both engaging and rewarding.

We continually look at ways of enhancing the Trans Siberian experience, incorporating seasonal considerations (such as the Harbin Ice Festival), providing the historical context (pay a visit to the only remaining Soviet Gulag) or inviting you to savour the diverse cultural influences of indigenous people (sit down with a shaman, or enjoy the Siberian art of throat singing!).

We have no group departures, our advertised dates always operate (barring anything completely out of our control) and, above all, we will tell you it like it is – allowing you to make the right choice from a portfolio of journeys rich in variety and full of memorable experiences. Sorry! We couldn’t resist at least one cliché!



## Visa Requirements

Visitors to China, Russia and Mongolia require visas. These must be obtained prior to departure. We offer full visa processing for clients based in the United Kingdom and EEC countries. For all other nationals we offer a full visa support service. Visa processing times for these countries can be up to;

China	5 Working Days
Mongolia	5 Working Days
Russia	10–15 Working Days

However fast track processing is possible. Contact our reservations department for individual advice and express fees.

Due to the support documents required by the Embassy of Russia (which we obtain), you will need to book your trip before starting to obtain visas.

For full information regarding visas, please refer to our web site or contact our reservations team.

## Hints and Tips

**TOP TIP!** – if you chose to book the no frills trip, you will miss Lake Baikal and Elstei Ger Lodge... why would you?

Photocopy your passport including the visas issued pages, airline tickets and insurance policies.

Your passport must be valid for at least six months past the end of your travel dates.

## Travellers Checklist

Day pack, back pack, money belt, first aid kit, heat proof mug, instant coffee, tea bags, sun hat, mosquito repellent, lightweight jacket, flip flops, swim wear, sun cream, warm jacket (Sep-Apr departures), ski clothing. (for those participating), warm waterproof walking boots, universal sink plug, bottle opener.

## Climate and time – Minimum/maximum Temperatures °C

	Jan/Feb	Mar/Apr	May/Jun	Jul/Aug	Sep/Oct	Nov/Dec
Beijing	-20/-10	-6/+14	+15/+22	+24/+30	+ 8/+22	-10/+6
Ulaanbaatar	-35/-22	-10/+12	+15/+24	+26/+42	+10/+25	-15/+8
Irkutsk	-40/-20	-10/+5	+ 8/+22	+26/+38	+10/+24	-15/+8
Moscow	-20/-10	-5/+12	+15/+22	+15/+30	+ 8/+24	-6/+10

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full on itinerary – 15 days

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## DAY 01

On arrival in Beijing you're free to make your own way to the hotel – any taxi driver will quickly find the address. The convenient location positions you to get the most of your own exploration of this legendary Imperial city, where the rich traditions of Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism meet with the



opulence of the Chinese Emperors and the vibrant realism of contemporary China. Chinese hotels cope badly with the idea of foreigners who haven't yet arrived so we'll have your onward rail tickets delivered once you have checked in, although with user hints, directions to the station, and Chinese language directions that will help you catch a taxi successfully and smoothly. During your stay in Beijing you'll certainly want to visit both the Forbidden City and Tiananmen Square. These are within walking distance of the Red Wall Hotel, and adjacent to each other, so this couldn't be more convenient! (Please note your Trans-Siberian train tickets will be delivered to the hotel during your stay.)

No meals

## DAY 02

Your time is free until your train departs. Hotel reception can preorder you a taxi – it's wise to allow one hour to get through Beijing's traffic and a second hour to complete security (metal-detectors are now in force and there can be queues to use them) and find your train and platform. And then you're heading off, along the most famous railway in the world!

No meals

## DAY 03

Afternoon arrival in Ulaanbaatar. Our driver will meet you at the end of the platform and will be holding a meeting-board with your name on. Transfer from the station, to a hotel with a chance to freshen up and have light snack, before departing for your city tour. Then transfer to Elstei Ger Lodge (70km). A relaxed evening in the bar after supper there are occasional impromptu performances of live Mongolian music, where you might hear the Morin Khuur (horse-head lyre), the cimbalom, or native Mongolian throat-singing.

Light Snack, Supper

## DAY 04

With no specific activities planned you can choose to chill out, read, go walking, or (for a small payment made directly to them locally) you can go horse riding with local nomad horsemen.

Breakfast, Lunch, Supper

## DAY 05

After breakfast make the return trip to Ulaanbaatar. Check into the Bayangol 4★ hotel. This is a great centrally located property and facilities include 5 restaurants, fitness centre, sauna and a supermarket. The balance of today is free to explore more of the city. You can choose to visit the heady atmosphere surrounding the Gandan Monastery or visit the Chojin Monastery Museum, or the Bazaar... log on and pick up your email in one of the numerous internet cafes on Peace Avenue, have a latte and French pastries in the new generation of new-age coffee stores, go souvenir shopping in the peculiar grandeur of the Central Department Store, or pick up some snack food for the train in the Store's food department... in the evening a wide range of traditional and new style Mongolian eateries are vying with European style places, Irish pubs and German beer halls to enjoy, usually with live music later on.

Breakfast

## DAY 06

If you are interested in Mongolian Buddhism you may be interested in making a return visit to the Gandan Monastery this morning, to see the morning prayer-ceremonies in progress. We also suggest you take an opportunity today to purchase picnic provisions for the next leg of your journey, as often this train as no dining car. This evening we will transfer you to the station where you will board the Irkutsk bound train.

Breakfast

## DAY 07

On board The Trans-Sib... heading towards Russia. When you make the border crossing there will be the usual halt for formalities.

No meals

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## DAY 08–10 YOU CHOOSE

**Baikal programmes.** Here we give you the option to make a choice of either Siberian Village which is staying in Listvyanka Village (a traditional village which now has some shops and a few cafes and even one bar) on the shores of Lake Baikal OR Fishermen's Cape of Baikal which is a more remote location far away from the tourist throng. Bolshoe Goloustnoe village is a C19th fishing settlement which is largely unchanged, and besides the village store there are no shops or cafes.

## SIBERIAN VILLAGE (Option 1)

### DAY 08

Early morning arrival in Irkutsk. Our driver will meet you at the end of the platform and will be holding a meeting-board with your name on. Transfer to Listvyanka Village (70km) travelling by road through the forest. On arrival you will be introduced to your host(s). Your stay will be in a traditional Siberian "Izba" the comfortable log timbered house that's found throughout Central Siberia. This morning you will enjoy a walking tour around Listvyanka Village. This will include a visit to the Limnological Museum and also a local Russian Orthodox Church dating back to the C18th. You will return to your Siberian home-stay for lunch of local dishes. Time to relax and enjoy your lakeside surroundings then this evening, before supper, you can experience a real Russian "banya" (sauna). For those who rate comfort over authenticity, hotel upgrades are available as an alternative to an izba home-stay.

Breakfast, Lunch, Supper

### DAY 09

Choose one activity from the list, it's all included in the trip price! You'll need to inform us of your choice before commencing your journey, so that we can have the right staff on hand for when you arrive (please note the Siberian weather puts seasonal limits on some activities – details below). Want to extend your life? Local legend claims that you can get anything from five extra years of life (paddling up to your knees) up to twenty years if you manage to go swimming!

- A. **SIBERIAN TREK** through the Taiga Forest with a local guide who will explain the wildlife, eco system and lore of the Taiga. (May–Oct)
- B. **SIBERIAN SCUBA** a fresh water dive in the worlds greatest lake with CMAS qualified instructors. (requires PADI-1. also minimum of 50 dives in warm water, and at least one dive within last six months). Includes one dive. (May–Sep)
- C. **QUAD BIKE** one hour quad bike trip with instructor. (May–Sep)
- D. **BOAT TRIP** one hour boat trip from Listvyanka Harbour on Lake Baikal. (Jul–Sep)
- E. **SNOW MOBILE TRIP** with a local guide through the forest, or even out over the deep frozen lake! Two hours (Dec–Apr)

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F. **SIBERIAN SKI** four hours at the local resort on the edge of the village. Instruction not included. The length of the slope is 1,200 m accessed by chair lift. Equipment and lift pass is included. (Jan–Mar)

G. **DO YOUR OWN THING** maybe take off on a cliff side walk, or mosey around the village, or take a dip in Lake Baikal! (Weather permitting!)

Supper this evening is with your host(s). Maybe try a local bar?

Breakfast, Lunch, Supper

### DAY 10

After breakfast say farewell to your village host(s). Transfer back to Irkutsk city. You will be given a map and some recommendations of interesting places to visit, free time to explore. Afternoon transfer to the station where you will board the Moscow bound train.

Breakfast

## FISHERMEN'S CAPE OF BAIKAL (Option 2)

### DAY 08

Early morning arrival in Irkutsk. Our driver will meet you at the end of the platform and will be holding a meeting-board with your name on. Transfer to the remote village of Bolshoe Goloustnoe. (110 km on rural roads). One of our local expert staffers will then show you around the village to include the old church and lake shore line. Get the 20th century out of your system in a real Russian Sauna "Banya" before your hosts serve traditional Siberian cuisine. (There is no hotel alternative at Bolshoe Goloustnoe village – the village has no hotels or cafes at all!)

Breakfast, Lunch, Supper

### DAY 09

Today you will set off on a leisurely lake side walk (8km) to Ushkani Cape, and visit our friends the fishermen for lunch at their cabin. Returning to the village and your host family.

Breakfast, Lunch, Supper

### DAY 10

After breakfast say farewell to your village host(s). Transfer back to Irkutsk city. You will be given a map and some recommendations of interesting places to visit, free time to explore. Afternoon transfer to the station where you will board the Moscow bound train.

Breakfast

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## DAY 11–12

On board... The Trans-Sib travelling towards Moscow. The dining car is the heart of social life on the train. It functions as bar, lounge, and take-out snack store, as well as a café serving reasonably priced meals. It is a great place to meet fellow travellers and locals alike, sharing your experiences of your journey so far with a few drinks, which no doubt will include some Vodka – and maybe smoked salmon and caviar too!

No meals

## DAY 13

“S Priezdom! Welcome to Moscow!” early morning arrival. Our driver will be there to meet you at the end of the platform, and will be hold a meeting-board with your name on. You'll then be transferred to the Irbis 3★ Hotel. The facilities available at this hotel include a Restaurant, Lobby Bar, Lobby Wi-Fi access, Luggage Room, Safety deposit boxes and an ATM machine. At check-in, (after 2pm) the hotel reception will advise you they will need your passport for visa registration. This process takes 1–2 hours. Your complimentary InfoPack is full of ideas for getting the most out of your free time.

No meals

## DAY 14

After breakfast one of our local expert staff will meet you at the hotel to take you on a three hour walking tour round the highlights – you'll use public transport around the centre to avoid the traffic jams and get the hang of the system for when you come to use it independently. Our staffers are full of ideas for this walk but are flexible about other ideas if you have your own. Your walk ends in the city centre around lunchtime. If you haven't pre-booked any of our range of city excursions the rest of the day is your own to explore further. Some of our top suggestions (please check opening times/days before setting off) would include visiting the Moscow Kremlin, the Tretyakov Gallery, the Pushkin Fine Arts



Museum, or a boat trip along the Mosvka River... perhaps locate some tickets for ballet, opera, circus or a concert this evening? As well as famous classical music traditions Moscow features on the touring schedules of world names in jazz, rock, pop and world music.

Breakfast

## DAY 15

You'll need to check out of your room by 12 noon today. For services we offer in St. Petersburg please refer to our web site or brochure.

Breakfast

## EXTENSIONS

### 16 DAY ITINERARY

#### SIBERIAN VILLAGE:

3 night home-stay Listvyanka Village.

#### FISHERMEN'S CAPE:

2 night home-stay Bolshoe Goloustnoe,

1 night home-stay Irkutsk City.