



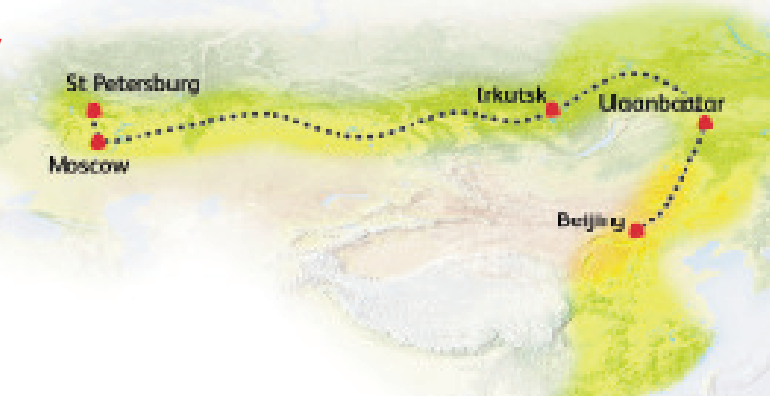
# Experience Classic Big Trans-Sib

Along the way  
St. Petersburg  
Moscow  
Irkutsk  
Ulaanbaatar  
Beijing

## Leaving from St. Petersburg to Beijing

Starting your trip in St. Petersburg gives you the opportunity to see the contrast between the imperial splendour and the soviet simplicity that existed both then and now.

This is a popular trip – for some good reasons! It combines the two en-route stops you absolutely shouldn't miss (Lake Baikal & Mongolia). 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

#### St. Petersburg

- > transfer on arrival to your hotel
- > 2 nights 3★ hotel, breakfast
- > 3 hour personalised walking tour with local expert

#### Moscow

- > transfer on arrival to your hotel
- > 2 nights 3★ hotel, breakfast
- > 3 hour personalised walking tour with local expert
- > transfer to the station on departure

#### Irkutsk

- Siberian Village
- > all transportation
- > 2 nights 3★ hotel, breakfast
- Listvyanka Village,
- > 1 night 3★ hotel, breakfast
- Irkutsk City, breakfast
- > excursion option

#### Ulaanbaatar

- > all transportation
- > 2 nights Elstei Ger Lodge (tourist Lodge), all meals
- > 1 night 3★ hotel, breakfast
- > City tour of Ulaanbaatar

### NO FRILLS

#### Train

- > 4-berth rail for complete journey (pre-assigned berths)
- > option to upgrade to 2-berth

#### St. Petersburg

- > transfer on arrival to your hotel
- > 2 nights 1★ hotel, breakfast
- > 3 hour personalised walking tour with local expert

#### Moscow

- > transfer on arrival to your hotel
- > 2 nights 1★ hotel, breakfast

#### Irkutsk (city based stay)

- > transfer on arrival
- > 3 nights home-stay Irkutsk City, breakfast
- > transfer to the station on departure

#### Ulaanbaatar (city based stay)

- > transfer on arrival to your hotel
- > 3 nights 1★ hotel, breakfast
- > transfer to the station on departure

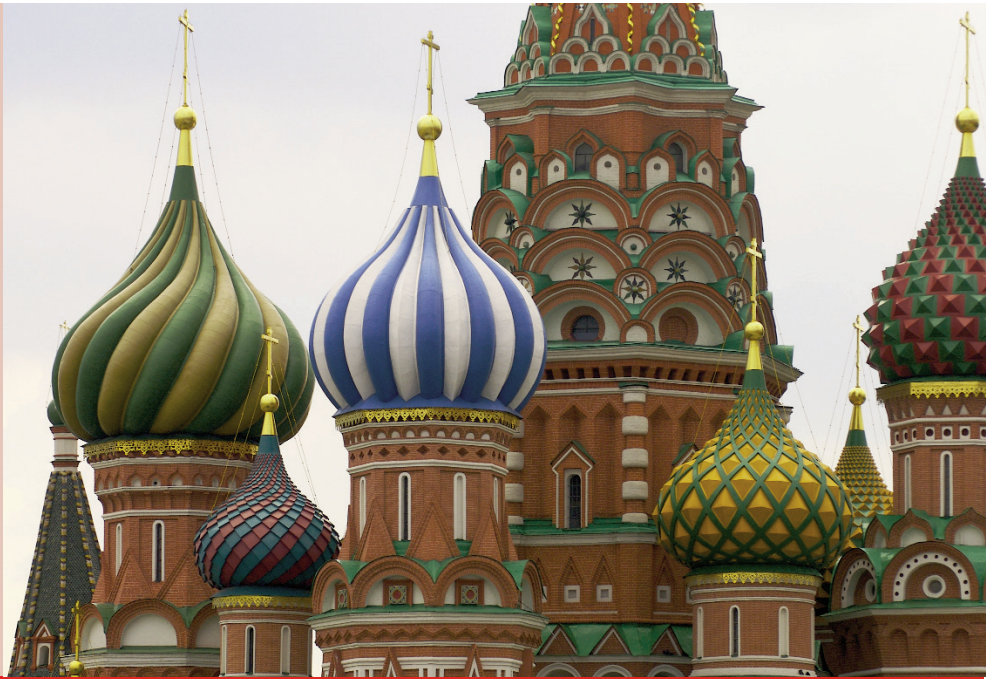
## In the know...

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

Most visitors to Russia, Mongolia and China require visas. These must be obtained prior to departure. Please check your nationalities visa requirements in advance of your planned travel dates. Visa processing times for these countries can be up to;

Russia	10 Working Days
Mongolia	06 Working Days
China	07 Working Days

However fast track processing is possible.

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 .

## 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, photographs of home to show the Nomads, Mongolian children love bubbles!, universal sink plug, bottle opener.

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

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

# Experience Classic Big Trans-Sib

full on itinerary – 18 days

Leaving from St. Petersburg  
to Beijing

## DAY 01

“S Priezdom! Welcome to St. Petersburg!” Our driver will be there to meet you from whichever flight, train or boat you arrive. You’ll then be transferred to your hotel. 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. (Please note your train tickets to Moscow will be delivered to the hotel during your two night stay.)

No meals

## DAY 02

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.

Breakfast

## DAY 03

You’ll need to check out of your room by 12 noon today but the hotel offers a Left Luggage service for a small fee. Your day is free until your evening departure to Moscow. Reception can book you a taxi to the station. Some of our top suggestions (please check opening times/days before setting off) The Hermitage Collection – Winter Palace. The canals and waterways of the “Northern Venice”. The Russian Museum of Fine Art. The Peter & Paul Fortress and the Tombs of the Tsars inside the Fortress Cathedral. The Church on the Spilt Blood, nearby the Souvenir Bazaar.

Breakfast

## DAY 04

Early morning arrival in Moscow. Our driver will meet you at the end of the platform and will be holding a meeting-board with your name on. You’ll then be transferred to the Panorama 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. One of our local expert staff will meet you at the hotel around 10am 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. Check-in is 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. (Please note your Trans-Siberian train tickets will be delivered to the hotel during your two night stay.)

No meals

## DAY 05

This morning you can continue sightseeing the Lenin Mausoleum is only open in the mornings, and getting there early (it’s in Red Square) helps beat the queues. 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 Moskva 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 06

Your morning is free until 11:30am when a driver is scheduled to take you to the station. Although there’s a restaurant car service on board your train you may want to supplement this with some snacks, treats, and fresh fruit that you could buy today. Your transfer from the hotel to Yaroslavl station is scheduled for 11:30am, so please be at the hotel reception where your driver will meet you and will assist your boarding of the Irkutsk bound train.

Breakfast

## DAY 07–09

On board The Trans-Sib... travelling towards Irkutsk. 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! Along the way you’ll see astonishing Siberian scenery as the deciduous forests of the Ural Mountains slowly give way to Siberian pine forests. The major landmarks are the great rivers you cross, including the River Ob at Novosibirsk (one of the most famous bridges on the route), and the gigantic Enisei River (at Krasnoyarsk).

No meals

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## DAY 10

Early morning arrival in Irkutsk. Our driver will meet you at the end of the platform, holding a meeting-board marked with your name. Transfer to "U Ozero" 3★ Hotel. (The name translates as "At the Lake Hotel", although it is not directly at the lake shore) situated in Listvyanka Village (70km) travelling by road through the forest. The facilities available at this hotel include; cafe-bar, Russian "banya" (sauna), safe at the reception. The nearest ATM-machine in the Baikal Hotel (Listvyanka remains a village, and doesn't have the range of banking services you could expect in a city). The official check-in time is 12 noon, the hotel reception will advise you they will need your passport for visa registration formalities. However if your room is available this will - of course - be allocated to you on arrival. (If your room is not available you will be able to leave your luggage with the hotel reception). You will have a chance to have breakfast before setting off on your walking tour around Listvyanka Village. This will include a visit to the Limnological Museum (this is an exhibition about the Lake, its formation, wildlife etc - it includes multimedia presentations, information about the creatures which live in the darkest depths, and also an aquarium with living aquatic species, including the unique freshwater Baikal seals) and also a small wooden village Russian Orthodox Church dating back to the C18th. You return to your hotel at the end of the walk, with time to relax and enjoy your lakeside surroundings, maybe experience real Siberian "banya" (sauna). (small payment locally at the hotel).

Breakfast

## DAY 11

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. The trek is 4- 5 hours long, includes a picnic style lunch and a good level of fitness is required. (May-Oct)

**B. CIRCUM BAIKAL PICNIC** Take the Ferry from Listvyanka to Port Baikal which takes around 15 minutes. Walk around Port Baikal, where you will see the train station of the old Circumbaikal rail line. Then you will walk along the rail line to the nearest tunnel (2-3 km). Stopping for a picnic lunch on the shore of Lake Baikal. Return to Port Baikal, ferry back to Listvyanka. The excursion is around 5 hours duration. (Jun-Sep)

**C. TALTSY WOODEN MUSEUM** A two hour trip which includes a return transfer by car, and entrance fees to the Taltsy open air wooden museum which is situated on the shore of the Angara river. On arrival you are free to explore independently and there is a tea house here where afterwards you can have a cup of tea and traditional Russian snack (pencakes, pirodzki, etc) This picturesque area shows how life was and has been sympathetically restored as a tourist attraction where you can buy authentic souvenirs. (Year round)

**D. SNOW MOBILE TRIP** with a local guide through the forest, or even out over the deep frozen lake! The excursion is around 2 hours 30 minutes duration. (Dec-Apr)

**E. DOG SLEDDING** trip for a distance Of 10km 1 dog sled for each client. The excursion is around 1 hour 30 minutes duration. (Dec-Mar)

**F. 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!)

Balance of day free time to explore the village at your own pace. Maybe try a local bar?

Breakfast

## DAY 12

After breakfast transfer back to Irkutsk city. Check-into The Angara 3★ Hotel. The Angara Hotel is located on the Kirov Square, in the heart of Irkutsk city. The close proximity to main tourist attractions means a great base for your brief stay in the city. The railway station is just 5 minutes' drive away. Facilities at this hotel include; free Wi-Fi access, 6 restaurants, 3 bars, ATM, 24 souvenir boutique, chemist's shop and a supermarket. Our local staff will provide a map and some recommendations of interesting places to visit. Some of our top suggestions (please check opening times/days before setting off) Decembrist Museum, Volkonsky House and The Epiphany Cathedral.

Breakfast

## DAY 13

Early morning transfer to Irkutsk station where you will board the Ulaanbaatar bound train. At midnight you will make the border crossing into Mongolia with the usual halt for formalities (there is no meal service on the train for the final night-time section from midnight until arrival tomorrow early morning)

Breakfast

## DAY 14

Early morning 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 shower and have breakfast. This morning you will depart for your city tour at 10.30am. This includes visiting the Gandan Buddhist Lamastery (monastery) and several temples located there. Afternoon transfer to Elstei Ger Lodge (70km). With a scheduled stop at the enormous monument to Genghis Khan along the way. It may not be quite traditional in style (since it's made of stainless steel) but it's an astounding edifice and a testament to Genghis's place in Mongolian culture (astonishingly the Communists tried to write him out of official history text-books).

Taking the elevator to top of this 10 metre high monument you visit the exhibition hall from where you will have an excellent panoramic view over the complex area and the scenery beyond. On arrival to Elstei Ger Lodge you will be allocated a four person share Ger. (2- person upgrade available.)

Breakfast, Supper

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## DAY 15

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. 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 khoomei throat-singing.

Breakfast, Lunch, Supper

## DAY 16

Around 10am you make the return trip to Ulaanbaatar. Check into the Bayangol 3★ Hotel. This is a great centrally located property and facilities include 5 restaurants, fitness centre, sauna and a minimarket. The balance of today is free to explore more of the city. You can choose to return to the heady atmosphere surrounding the Gandan Monastery (which you'll have already visited when you were in the capital last time), or visit the Choijin 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

## EXTENSIONS

### 19 DAY ITINERARY

#### SIBERIAN VILLAGE:

3 night 3★ hotel, Listvyanka Village,  
1 night 3★ hotel, Irkutsk City.

## DAY 17

Early morning transfer to the station for the Beijing bound train. Time to leave the Capital On The Steppes – today's train journey meanders through amazing sun parched scenery of the Southern Gobi. Later that evening there comes the Chinese border formalities, after which you are free to get some sleep.

Breakfast

## DAY 18

Don't oversleep today, as it's possibly some of the most spectacular scenery of the entire route, as you leave the desert scenery behind and pass by mountains and rice paddy fields. Afternoon arrival at Beijing Central Station. For services in China and beyond please refer to our web site.

No meals