



Experience Epic Trans-Sib

Along the way
Beijing
Ulaanbaatar
Irkutsk
Moscow
St. Petersburg

Leaving from Beijing to St. Petersburg

“Couldn’t we have the two best en-route stops”, you asked us, “but with more time in each one?” “What a great chance to get to the Gobi Desert!” we answered, and “The Epic Trans-Sib” was born. The highlight here, obviously, is getting to Erdenezuu, in Bayan-Gobi. It’s built on the site of Genghis Khan’s former Great Encampment (“Kuriltai”), and modern “Harhorin” is actually... Karakorum. But don’t let your eyes miss the other goody here – some super Baikal activity options, including trekking and scuba.



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

Mongolia

- > all transportation
- > 2 nights with Nomads in traditional Mongolian Gers, all meals
- > 2 nights Elstei Ger Lodge (tourist lodge), all meals
- > excursions
- > 1 night 4★ hotel, breakfast
- > City tour of Ulaanbaatar

Irkutsk

Choice of programmes either Siberian Village or Adventure Trek.

Siberian Village

- > all transportation
- > 2 nights home-stay Listvyanka Village, all meals
- > excursion option

Adventure Trek

- > all transportation
- > 2 nights camping, equipment provided, all meals

Moscow

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

St. Petersburg

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

In the know...

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.

"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.

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.



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! – The Nomads have rarely seen a picture of themselves. Don't forget to show them one on your digital camera!

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

Climate and time – Minimum/maximum Temperatures °C

	May/June	July/Aug	Sep/Oct
Beijing	+15/+22	+24/+30	+ 8/+22
Ulaanbaatar	+15/+24	+26/+42	+10/+25
Irkutsk	+ 8/+22	+26/+38	+10/+24
Moscow/St. Petersburg	+15/+22	+15/+30	+ 8/+24

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full on itinerary – 20 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 3

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 freshen up and have a 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 4

With no specific activities planned you can choose to chill out, read, sunbathe, 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 5

After breakfast you will depart Ulaanbaatar for the Bayangobi region. Picnic lunch en-route. Arrival at a herdsman encampment late afternoon. Tonight you are the guests of the herdsman, and you'll stay in a nomadic ger tent – supper with your herdsman hosts.

Breakfast, Lunch, Supper

DAY 6

Depart after breakfast for a day trip through the countryside of Övörkhangai Province in the direction of Harhorin (two hours of off-road driving each way). Our route takes us into the Orkhon Valley, a World Heritage Site, which can be called the birthplace of Mongolian civilisation – the sites of the earliest metal working (which created the weapons that made the Mongolian empire great) are located here. We stop for a picnic lunch amid the stunning scenery. This afternoon we arrive at modern Harhorin – the settlement Genghis Khan would have known as Karakorum. It was here at the legendary gathering of clans that they declared Genghis the "Great Khan" ("Chinghiskhan"), and his military campaigns of conquest began. Nothing is left of the ancient settlement, but on its site is the (rather later) monastery of Erdene Zuu, one of the most important Buddhist centres in Mongolia... and on the grounds of the monastery is the single turtle statue that remains of Genghis's great Royal Court. Come back to our nomadic host family and will have a traditional communal supper with them.

Breakfast, Lunch, Supper

DAY 07

Around 10am you 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 minimarket. 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 08

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 09

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 10–12 YOU CHOOSE

Baikal programmes. Here we give you the option to make a choice of either Siberian Village which is staying in Listvyanka Village on the shores of Lake Baikal OR Adventure Trek, which is available for two or more passengers travelling together, for arrivals between 1st June until 1st September. The Adventure Trek is a camping expedition and requires a good level of fitness. You are required to help the guide carry the equipment provided.

SIBERIAN VILLAGE (Option 1)

DAY 10

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 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. (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 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 at Lake Baikal. (Jul–Sep)
- E. **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 12

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

ADVENTURE TREK (Option 2)

DAY 10

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 your host(s) where you will have the opportunity to have a shower and enjoy breakfast before preparing for your trek. (Leaving your heavy baggage in Irkutsk). After lunch you will depart by hydrofoil (2 hrs) to Bolshie Koty. On arrival there will be a trek of 9km before setting up camp in Sennaya Bay.

Breakfast, Lunch & Supper

DAY 11

Trekking along the Baikal shore (25 km). Picnic lunch along the way. Set up camp at Semenikha Bay.

Breakfast, Lunch & Supper

DAY 12

Trekking to Goloustnoe Village (9 km). Return to Irkutsk by public bus. Where you will have the option to leave your bags at our local office. You will be given a map and some recommendations of interesting places to visit. 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

DAY 13–14

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

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DAY 15

“S Priezdom! Welcome to Moscow!” early evening arrival. Our driver will be there to meet you at the end of the platform, and will 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 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 16

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 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 17

You’ll need to check out of your room by 12 noon today. A full day for you to pack in the rest! Own transfer this evening to Leningradsky Station where you will board the St. Petersburg bound train.

Breakfast

DAY 18

Early morning arrival in St. Petersburg. Our driver will be there to meet you at the end of the platform, and will hold a meeting-board with your name on. You’ll then be transferred to the hotel. Your guide will meet you at the hotel and introduce you to the city’s highlights – a good basis for starting your own explorations. Although the public transport (used on today’s excursion) is similar to Moscow’s, there are a few quirks that your guide will show you. After lunchtime you’re on your own to explore further.

No meals



DAY 19

Free day for you to pack in the best of the rest! Perhaps you have pre-booked one of our city based excursions for today. 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 20

Check out of your room by 12 noon. Own transfer on departure.

Breakfast

EXTENSIONS

21 DAY ITINERARY

SIBERIAN VILLAGE:

3 night home-stay Listvyanka Village.

ADVENTURE TREK:

2 nights camping (37km trekking),
1 night home-stay Irkutsk City.