



Experience Outer & Inner Mongolia via Irkutsk

Along the way
St Petersburg
Moscow
Irkutsk
Ulaanbaatar
Huhehot
Beijing

Leaving from St. Petersburg to Beijing via Irkutsk

Everyone's heard of "Outer Mongolia", without actually knowing anything about it. But "Inner Mongolia"? The names come from Imperial China. When they conquered Mongolia they realised that ruling it would be impossible. So the grassland part nearest to Beijing (the "Inner" part) they ruled like the rest of China, but they gave up once the Gobi was in the way, and the "Outer" part was ruled by martial law. "Outer Mongolia" is now the independent country of Mongolia, one of the world's least-visited countries. "Inner Mongolia" is still a part of China, and you can imagine how few go to it? But it was once the richest part of Mongolia – this trip is for the inquisitive and adventurous!



What's included

FULL ON

Train

- > 4-berth rail for complete journey (pre-assigned berths)
- > with 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, Listvyanka Village, breakfast
- > 1 night 3★ hotel, Irkutsk City, breakfast
- > excursion option

Ulaanbaatar & Inner/Outer Mongolia

- > all transportation included
- > 3 nights with Nomads in traditional Gers, all meals
- > 2 nights Elstei Ger Lodge (tourist lodge), all meals
- > excursions
- > 1 night 4★ hotel, breakfast included
- > City tour of Ulaanbaatar

Huhehot

- > transfer on arrival
- > 2 nights 3★ hotel, breakfast included
- > excursion

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.

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

“Nomads” don’t just wander around aimlessly. Most Nomads will roam over the same land and tracks their grandparents knew, always returning in winter to the same place, where their animal pens are located. Nomads traditionally count their wealth in head of animals, not in money.



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 Russia, Mongolia and China require visas. These must be obtained prior to departure. 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

A SPECIAL NOTE ABOUT NOMAD STAYS
When we say “nomad stay” it means exactly that - you are sharing the lives of herdsmen who live on the Mongolian Steepe. There’s often no electricity, they don’t speak English, and there isn’t any plumbing!

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, lightweight jacket, flip flops, swim wear, sun cream, photographs of home to show the Nomads, Mongolian children love bubbles!, universal sink plug, bottle opener.

Climate and time – Minimum/maximum Temperatures °C

	May/June	Jul/Aug	Sep/Oct
St. Petersburg/Moscow	+15/+22	+15/+30	+ 8/+24
Irkutsk	+ 8/+22	+26/+38	+10/+24
Ulaanbaatar	+15/+24	+26/+42	+10/+25
Huhehot	+27/+31	+31/+30	+26/+22
Beijing	+15/+22	+24/+30	+8/+22

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full on itinerary – 24 days

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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

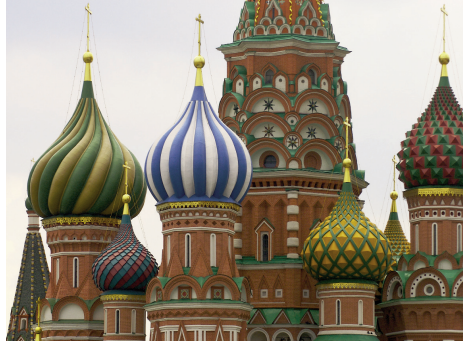
After breakfast one of our local expert staff will meet you at the hotel to take you on a three hour walking tour round the highlights – you’ll use public transport around the centre to avoid the traffic jams and get the hang of the system for when you come to use it independently. Our staffers are full 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

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 11:45am 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 Yaroslavsky station is scheduled for 11:45am, 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 heartbeat of social life of 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. (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 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. (Jun-Sep)

C. TALTSY WOODEN MUSEUM A three hour trip which includes a driver, and English speaking guide to the Taltsy open air wooden museum on the shore of Lake Baikal. This picturesque area shows how life was and has been sympathetically restored as a tourist attraction where you can ride Troikas and also buy authentic souvenirs. There is a tea house here also to refresh you after a busy morning sightseeing. (Year round)

D. 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 your 3★ Hotel. You will be given a map and some recommendations of interesting places to visit, balance of day free to explore. Balance of day free to explore.

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 the Gandan Monastery ceremony. After lunch you will depart Ulaanbaatar for the Bayangobi region. Evening arrival at a herdsman encampment. Tonight you are the guests of the herdsmen, and you'll stay in a nomadic ger tent.

Breakfast, Supper

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DAY 15

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, 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 supper.

Breakfast, Lunch, Supper

DAY 16

This morning see how a nomadic family milks their live stock and learn how they produce dairy products using the traditional Mongolian method, and also participate in bringing the herd into pasture. Free time to explore the Bayangobi area; maybe take a walk along the sand dunes. This evening we stay with our nomad host family, will have supper and learn traditional Mongolian games.

Breakfast, Lunch, Supper

DAY 17

This morning depart to our tourist Ger Lodge. 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 allocated a four person share Ger. (2- person upgrade available.) This is a different experience from staying with nomads, as Elstei is purposely set up for foreign visitors. This evening chill out and relax after the long journey.

Breakfast, Lunch, Supper

DAY 18

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. 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.

Breakfast, Lunch, Supper

DAY 19

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 a supermarket.

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

DAY 20

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 and it will easy to keep yourself amused as there is so much still to see and do. We recommend you take this opportunity to purchase provisions for the next leg of your journey, as often this service has no dining car. Be back at the hotel at 8pm where your driver will meet you at reception. You will then be transferred the short distance to Ulaanbaatar station where we will assist you boarding of the Huhehot bound train.

Breakfast

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DAY 21

Spectacular scenery that's worth waking early for this morning as you trundle through the Southern Gobi. There's a layover at the border while they change the train bogeys to Chinese gauge – they don't rush themselves for this job, so it's worth getting out to wander around, even if the surroundings are not especially interesting. Another layover once you reach the Chinese side, for passport control (you are usually not allowed out of the station, as you have not yet cleared Chinese passport control). (It is worth pre-planning your use of the bathroom today, as it will be locked during these stops!) Late evening arrival in Huhehot, the capital of Inner Mongolia. Our driver will meet you at the end of the platform where he will be holding a meeting-board with your name on. Transfer to the Aoitai hotel, which is located in the city's shopping and business district.

No meals

DAY 22

After breakfast your guide will meet you at reception, where you will depart for a full day city of Huhehot, which will include; Zhaojun Tomb, Dazhao Temple and The Five Pagoda Temple. Expect to return to the hotel late afternoon. Our recommendation for this evening; treat yourself to a slap up Chinese meal – Huhehot has a super selection featuring both local Mongolian (you can even eat in a Mongolian cart-drawn war-ger) and traditional Beijing-style cuisine.

Breakfast, Lunch



EXTENSIONS

25 DAY ITINERARY

SIBERIAN VILLAGE:

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

DAY 23

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 to participate in a little extra shopping or sightseeing. Own transfer to the station for the Beijing bound train.

Breakfast

DAY 24

Early morning arrival at Beijing West Station. For additional services we offer in Beijing and beyond please refer to our web site.

No meals